Little Agnes Series

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TRYING TO BE USEFUL.

BY

MRS. MADELINE LESLIE,

AUTHOR OF "MINNIE AND HER PETS," "LITTLE AGNES," "TIM THE SCISSORS-GRINDER," ETC.

"Goodness is beauty in its best estate."

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TO THE

MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR,

IN THE EARNEST HOPE THAT, WITH THE OTHER

BOOKS OF THIS SERIES, IT MAY AID THEIR

MISSION OF LOVE.

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TRYING TO BE USEFUL.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEWING SOCIETY.

The Meeting. — The Choice of Officers. — A Game at Still Palm. — Louise Merton's Interest in Missions. — Her salutary Reflections.

"REMEMBER, then, at two o'clock precisely!"

"Yes, two o'clock!" loudly repeated Agnes, who was already at some distance.

The hour of two arrived; and while the village clock was yet striking, six little girls were assembled in Mrs. Lovell's best chamber, among whom might be seen Louise Merton and Agnes Lovell; indeed, they were very prominent in what was going forward, and, it was easy to perceive, were much respected, and looked upon as quite superior to the rest of the party.

A table was in the middle of the room, which was a very large one. It was now covered with baskets filled with pieces of calico, thread, needles, thimbles, and all things they considered necessary for the commencement of a sewing society. Louise and Agnes withdrew to one side of the room to settle finally the point so many times discussed, viz., who should be the president and who the vice president — this honor being aspired to by both of them.

"Louise, you know that I am the oldest," said Agnes, "and it is just about the same to be the vice president as the president."

"Yes, you're five days older than I am, and I suppose you must have it; but ——"

"That's a good girl!" joyfully exclaimed Agnes; "now let us begin."

Standing side by side at the table before which the others were sitting, Agnes began by rapping loudly thereupon, though it could hardly be to command attention, as all her little

auditors were sitting with hands folded, in breathless silence, for fear they should lose one word of what was to follow. "You all know," continued she, "that we are going to have a sewing society; and we have met this afternoon to choose our officers and to form a constitution."

"I move," said Louise, "that Miss Agnes Lovell be the president of this society."

"I second the motion," said little Lucy Lovell, as previously instructed.

"If this be your minds, ladies, you will please manifest it," said Agnes, in a clear, loud tone of voice. All then raised their hands. "It is a vote. I now move that Miss Louise Merton be the vice president;" which was also seconded and carried. Phebe Shepard and Ellen Fuller were then successively chosen secretary and treasurer, when there were four officers and two members — Lucy Lovell and Sarah Merton, looking as if they thought that they had been neglected, though too young to care much about it.

"We will now proceed," said the president, feeling that a very important part had been accomplished. "What shall be the name of our society?" looking at the vice president, who was the only one expected to answer.

"I think the United States Sewing Society would be a good name," modestly responded Louise.

"Yes, that's a very good name!" Then addressing the society — "Those who wish to have this society called the United States Sewing Society will please manifest it." All raised their hands, deeply impressed with the importance of the plan in which they were engaged. Work was then distributed by the two principal officers; the others having been chosen more as a mark of respect to the families to which they belonged, than from any supposition that their services would ever be necessary.

For about half an hour all was comparatively quiet, it being generally understood that their object would be to support a little heathen girl

in one of the mission families, their attention having been particularly directed to the subject by a lecture addressed to children from Mr. B——, a returned missionary. Lucy and Sarah then exhibited symptoms of uneasiness, which was secretly felt by all. The president announced that there would be a recess, which announcemennt was received with a burst of applause.

"What shall we play? *What shall we play?*" cried they, eagerly.

"O, let's play 'still palm,'" responded Phebe; to which all consented, and they immediately commenced darkening the room. A large pile of rose blankets lay in an easy chair in the corner. Agnes sent Lucy to the kitchen for some forks, and the blankets, pinned to the windows, in addition to the shutters, excluded every ray of light. A lively game now commenced; but ah, how soon to terminate! One of the little members, in trying to escape from being caught, ran against the table which stood in the centre

of the room, and severely injured her head. Agnes sprang to open the door, while Louise kindly helped up her little sister, wiped her tears, and tried in vain to soothe her. Imagine what must have been their confusion when Mrs. Lovell, alarmed by the noise, appeared in the midst of the scene, astonishment and grief depicted upon her countenance. Sarah hid her aching head behind her sister, while all looked at the upturned table, the baskets emptied of their contents, and the countenance of Mrs. Lovell, and felt that they deserved censure. In a mild, but firm tone, she said, turning to Agnes, "I thought you asked your little friends here to form a society!" Then, taking Sarah by the hand, she continued, "Little girls, you had better pick up your work and go home, now."

They all sighed, as they put back pieces of uncut calico, which, in their zeal, they had intended should have been far advanced toward a quilt before they closed their meeting. In si-

lence they restored the room to order, put on their bonnets, and prepared to go home.

"I suppose the next meeting will be at our house," said Louise.

"Yes," replied Agnes, while for a moment she resumed the important air of president. "Girls, do you hear? The next meeting will be at Dr. Merton's house, next Saturday afternoon."

Louise then went down stairs, and was joined by Sarah, who was quite recovered from her fall, by the kind attention of Mrs. Lovell.

Louise and Sarah Merton were the youngest of a large family of children. Dr. Merton, their father, resided in a pleasant village in one of the New England states. He was an eminent Christian, and sought above all things for wisdom to train up his dear children in the way in which they should go, feeling assured by the divine promise, that when they were old they would not depart from it. In all these wishes and prayers, he was joined by his excellent lady,

who desired nothing better than to see their children walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.

So far, they had been eminently successful. Several were already settled in life, occupying stations of great respectability. One son, William, was now in college, and these two little girls remained at home.

Louise had always heard a good deal of conversation about missionaries, and had had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with several when they were visiting at her father's house, just before their embarkation. Of all things in the world, she most desired to be a missionary; or, as she was too young for that at present, being now but nine years old, she would talk with her mother of the practicability of sending for some little heathen girls, that she might take care of them at home.

Mrs. Merton encouraged her daughter to talk with her, and Louise at last became so much interested in the subject, that she could think of

nothing else. Her baby house was entirely neglected, and the moment she came in from school, she wanted to be talking over her plan of sending for a heathen child, and training it up to be good.

At last her mother gave her consent to commence a suit of clothes for her little Emily, as she had named her. Pocket handkerchiefs and shirts were cut from old linen, and two of her dresses were fitted for a child of three years of age.

Mrs. Merton would often smile to see her little girl so intently occupied; and while Louise would sit by her side, with her basket of work upon a cricket before her, Mrs. Merton would lift her heart in prayer to God, that her desire to do good might grow with her growth, and strengthen with her strength, and that if God should fit her to be a missionary, her parents might have grace given them to part with their dear child, to labor even in the remote parts of the earth.

All this had happened about two years before the events related at the commencement of the chapter, yet Louise had never entirely lost her interest in missionaries, and having a short time before had her attention particularly directed to the subject by an address to children, she had been led to inquire what she could do. Night after night she had made it the burden of her prayer; plan after plan had been thought of and rejected, until a lady called one evening to see her mother in regard to the benevolent society which had long been in operation in the village.

Louise all at once started and ran to her room, and there, in her joy, soliloquized, "O, we'll have a sewing society! *we'll have a sewing society!*" She could hardly wait until morning to talk with Agnes, her confidential friend and adviser; but at last she fell asleep, and dreamed of receiving a letter from a little girl who had been hopefully converted in one of the mission families, and who wrote to tell her young friends in America that she now worshipped the true God.

The next morning Louise prepared herself for school, and set off, hoping to meet Agnes; but in this she was disappointed, as her friend did not come in until it was time for the reading of the Scriptures. When the prayer was concluded, Louise tried hard to apply herself to her studies, and succeeded in a measure, though every now and then the idea of a society would dart through her mind. Glad was she when the teacher rang the bell for a recess. Putting her arm in Agnes', she said, "Come with me to the rock; I want to tell you something very particular."

Agnes was all attention. When they were seated upon their favorite rock, Louise, who could not wait to explain, said abruptly, "Agnes, why can't we little girls have a sewing society, and support a heathen child, as Mr. B. told us was done in many places by children no older than we are?"

Agnes waited a moment, as if fully to understand what she meant, and then replied that she should like it of all things.

I will not delay to relate all the conversation which passed between them. This was Tuesday morning. At noon their parents were consulted, and consent obtained, though with many misgivings lest the whole thing should fall through for want of an older sister or friend to be present and direct their proceedings.

The little girls, in the mean time, endeavored to learn how to put votes, to choose officers, &c.; and when Saturday afternoon arrived, they had every thing in readiness for the meeting. Their intention was to make quilts, hoping to find a ready market for them among the friends of their parents.

The particulars of their first meeting I have already related; and it was with feelings of bitter disappointment that Louise, on going to her chamber at night, reviewed the events of the afternoon.

"How could I be so foolish as to wish to play, when I have so longed for the time to come that I might sew? O, how different it

has been from what I anticipated. I could not have believed I should have done so; but I mean to do better next time. But how can I be sure that I shall do any better than I have now done? Father has told me again and again, that I can never keep my resolutions while I depend upon myself for strength. Yes, that is it! I did not ask God to help me to-day, for I never dreamed of stopping to play." And with feelings subdued and tender, Louise kneeled by the side of her bed, and asked God to give her a new heart, with holy affections instead of sinful ones, and above all, to enable her to keep all the good resolutions which she had made.

This little girl was inclined to look at her conduct in a serious point of view. She knew it was not wrong to play. Her parents had always encouraged their children in all proper amusements, and especially in out-door games, as very conducive to health. Particularly had they striven to show them, both by precept and

example, that cheerfulness was not opposed to religion, and that, should they become Christians, they would not thereby debar themselves from rational enjoyment. But she felt that, having undertaken to work for a particular purpose, she had not persevered as she ought, but had been easily turned aside from what she knew to be right.

Louise had never given her heart to God. She had never seen the depth of the wickedness which often led her to rebel against him, and to refuse to obey his commands; but she had been carefully taught to distinguish between right and wrong, and she never for a moment thought of doubting the truth of what had been often read to her from the Bible — that if she should die in her sins, she could never be happy in the presence of God and her Saviour.

Young as she was, she had had many seasons of sorrow on account of her sins, and an earnest, ardent desire to be good. The thought of Jesus dying for her was what impressed her

most deeply; and she would often weep to think it would wound him that she refused to give him her heart. Especially on the evening of the Sabbath, — that precious season afterwards so fondly remembered, when Dr. Merton gathered his family around him for evening prayer, — the Sabbath lessons were repeated and explained, a chapter read in which he turned aside from the usual place in course, and read some account of the Saviour, his love to children, and his desire for their salvation; then a hymn was sung, in which Louise, and even little Sarah, joined; after which they all knelt down, while the Christian father offered a fervent prayer for himself and for those so dear to him. His faithful, devoted companion was first mentioned, and then one by one the different members of the family. God's blessing was earnestly sought for the dear absent ones, and then for those still under the parental roof.

So solemn and tender were these seasons, that Louise sometimes wished she could frame an

excuse for absenting herself. "For," said she to her mother, "I feel that I am so wicked not to love such a blessed Saviour! and I determine to love him; but, O, I forget it so soon!"

Yet the precious seed was sown, and in due time sprang up and bore fruit.

CHAPTER II.

THE PATCH-WORK QUILT.

The Berry Party. — Mrs. Merton's Advice. — Second Meeting of the United States Sewing Society. — Perseverance of Agnes and Louise. — Debate about the Sale of the Quilt.

A WEEK passed; Saturday morning came — a clear, pleasant, sunny morning in July.

"O, what a pleasant day!" said Louise to her sister, as they were dressing. "I am so glad! The society is to meet here, you know."

"Yes," replied Sarah, "but I heard Phebe tell Lucy Lovell, if it was pleasant, she meant to ask her mother to let her go 'berrying.'"

"Go berrying!" repeated Louise. "Why, she must have forgotten the society. I will see her, and remind her of it; and you may tell any of the girls whom you see, that I shall expect them here."

Louise and Sarah were on their way to school, when they saw Agnes, Lucy, and Ellen, running across the Common to meet them.

"I was just going to your house," shouted Agnes, as soon as she had come within speaking distance. "Mother says we may go berrying. Joe Turner was at our house this morning, and he says the blueberries are ripe and very thick in your father's pasture. I have been to Ellen's house, and her mother says she may go; and I was just going for you when I saw you on your way to school." Agnes was obliged to stop to recover breath.

For one moment Louise thought, "O, I should so like to go;" but then she said, "Why, Agnes, have you forgotten the society?"

"So it is; I had forgotten it. But no matter; we can meet next Saturday, you know, and we hardly ever have such a pleasant day as this." Agnes looked up at the clear blue sky, and continued, "Besides, societies never meet so often. Once a fortnight is enough."

"O," said Louise, more than half inclined to cry, "I don't think it's right to give it up so."

While they had been talking, Phebe had come up, and Agnes said, "Well, here are all of us; so we will take a vote. Those who wish to go berrying will please raise their hands."

Every hand except Louise's was raised. She looked very sorrowful.

"Now, you see I can't help going," continued Agnes, who felt sorry to see her friend take it so much to heart; "and I promise you I certainly will go to the society next time."

"Will you, really, truly, dear Agnes, and not put it off for any thing?"

"Yes, I will; but come, we shall be late at school."

When Louise went home at noon, she related to her mother all that had passed, and asked what she should do. Mrs. Merton saw that she had a conscientious difficulty about going with her companions, when she felt that she had pledged herself to the society, and she deter-

mined to encourage her to persevere in what she had been so anxious to undertake, while, at the same time, she would plan a little excursion, to take place on Wednesday afternoon, which would not interfere with the object they had in view.

"Don't you think, Louise, that you could persuade Agnes to wait until Wednesday? And then you could all go together, if it should be pleasant. You and your little friends may bring home your berries, and I will have some nice milk ready, when, if their parents will consent, they all can take supper with you."

"O, thank you, my dear mother," replied Louise, throwing her arms around her mother's neck. "How nicely you always plan for me. But may I not run and ask Agnes?"

"Yes, my dear; and Sarah may go in and tell Ellen the plan."

"What a dear, good mother mine is!" soliloquized Louise, as she ran joyfully across the Common to the house of Mr. Lovell. When she approached, she could see that Phebe and Lucy

were standing upon the steps before the south door, waiting for Agnes, who soon appeared, with two little baskets in her hand.

"O, here comes Louise — that's right — I thought you'd go."

"Where's Sarah?" cried Lucy, before Louise could have time to speak. In truth, she began to be afraid it was too late to turn them aside from their proposed expedition; but slackening her pace, she walked slowly up to the group.

"Why, what's the matter? Won't your mother let you go?" said one of the girls.

"She has sent me to invite you all to our house on Wednesday afternoon, and she says we can take our baskets, and go and get some berries, and she'll have some nice supper ready for us, and we can eat our berries with milk."

"Well, girls," said Agnes, "I move that we all accept the invitation; and now Dr. Merton has put up such a nice swing in the grove, we can have a beautiful time after supper, before we come home."

"And she hopes," continued Louise, "to see you all at our house this afternoon, to the society." Louise put her hand in Agnes', and waited to see what they would say.

"I'll give up going berrying this afternoon, if you will, girls; and as I am the president, I suppose I ought to be there."

Louise looked very happy, and thanked Agnes by a look of affection. But the others were not so easily induced to postpone their pleasure.

"Let them go," whispered Agnes; "you and I can do more if we are alone, and don't have to fix work for them."

So it was decided. The basket was carried back into the house, and Louise joyfully led Agnes home, carrying in one hand a large bag, containing the calico for the quilt.

Spreading the pieces out upon the bed, they went to work in earnest, and as they had no officers to choose, or business to occupy them, they really made rapid progress. How pleasantly passed the time! They cut out the work,

and stitched, by turns. Block after block was sewed together, the corners being made exactly to match.

"I wonder who will buy our quilt?" said Louise.

"O, we can sell it easy enough," replied Agnes; "how much shall we ask for it?"

"Mother says we shall probably get more for it than it is really worth, because people like to encourage little girls when they try to do good."

"Well, it really is a great deal of work to make a whole quilt, and then to sew it all together. I wonder when we shall get it done. If we could always have such a nice time as we have had to-day, I dare say we could finish it in a month."

Louise could talk while she worked, and, scarcely raising her eyes, she said, "O, no! we only sew on it Saturday in the afternoon; but I mean to persevere, if it does take a long time."

"So do I," said her companion; "but I wish we had not asked the other girls to join, for it

will take so long to see to their work; and then it will not be done nicely."

"Perhaps," replied Louise, "they won't want to come any more; and then, if their mothers see we are really making good use of them, they may let us keep their pieces of calico." These had been paid in by the little girls instead of an admission fee in money.

At five o'clock, Agnes and Louise counted their squares, and found they had completed ten. With what perfect delight they spread them out in order upon the bed, to judge how many would be required! They walked around and around it, exclaiming, "O, what a beauty it will be! I am sure we can sell it."

Week after week passed, and still "the friends" did not tire in their labor of love. They had joined several little parties of pleasure on the afternoon of Wednesday, and had enjoyed them far more on account of the self-denial they had practised. Once or twice, Agnes had seemed inclined to excuse herself for an afternoon; but

a sorrowful look from her dear Louise decided her to forego any pleasure rather than give pain to one she loved so dearly. Autumn had now come, with its rich treasures of fruit and gaudy flowers. Every night, on her return from school, Louise would run into the garden to look at her china-asters, marigolds, and verbenas, and think she was bidding them a last adieu; but still the weather was mild, and the frost had not come to pluck them with his icy hand.

The forests were beginning to put off their gay attire, while the happy songsters, whose home was in their branches, were trilling their last notes, before taking their departure for a sunnier clime, until the snows of winter should be passed.

Until now, Louise and Agnes had worked by themselves; but as they had nearly as many squares as would be requisite, Mrs. Merton told them they might bring their work into her chamber, and she would help them to arrange it for sewing together.

The little girls were very much encouraged by this offer, and in the course of the afternoon they had made quite a large piece, while the rest was nicely caught together, so that they would know exactly how it was to be sewed.

Mrs. Merton took this opportunity to commend them highly for their industry and perseverance, and for the neatness of their work. She talked freely with them about their plan, and found them determined to appropriate their money to missionary purposes, but had not quite concluded in what particular manner. They expected to realize a large sum. Indeed, each seemed to shrink from naming any particular price, lest it should be more than the other would think they had any right to ask. Now, they must talk over these matters; as the time approached to sell it, they began to feel rather more anxious to find a purchaser.

"Wouldn't it be too bad," asked Louise, one afternoon, "if no one should buy it, after we have taken so much pains?"

"Yes, it would, indeed!" replied Agnes. "If they don't, we'll keep it ourselves; but I shall never trouble myself to make another, if we don't get a good handsome price for this."

"O! Agnes, I'll tell you what we can do. We can give the quilt itself to the missionaries. You know they have to carry such things when they go; but then we should have to quilt it, and I don't know how we could do that, as we neither of us know how to quilt. But I dare say, some way will be opened, as mother says, for us to sell it."

CHAPTER III.

THE PLAID CLOAK.

The Poor Student's Surtout. — Proposal of Louise. — Interview between Dr. Merton and his Wife. — His Aid in the Purchase of a Cloak.

During the week following the events narrated in the preceding chapter, a gentleman came to reside in the family of Dr. Merton, for a few months previous to his embarkation for Constantinople as a missionary. He soon gained the affection of Louise and Sarah, and also of Agnes, who spent much of her time out of school with her friend. But "the missionary," as the children called him, was very poor. He had made great exertions to help himself while preparing for the ministry. But as this necessarily interrupted his studies, his friends advised him to avail himself of charitable aid. This was readily procured for him, by applying to what I think is called the

Ladies' Jews' Society, in Boston, as it was for the Jews in Turkey for whom he was destined to labor.

The benevolent ladies composing this society cheerfully undertook to supply him with a certain sum every month, which had enabled him so far to keep out of debt. He was decently dressed; but one bleak, cold day, he was obliged to walk some distance; and as Louise met him just going out of the gate, she saw that he had on an old surtout, which was much too small for him, so that he could not put on the sleeves, but buttoned it around the neck.

Louise ran in haste to tell her mother, who had also seen him as he passed the window. She felt very much like crying, to see so good a man with so poor a coat, though, as she afterwards laughingly told Agnes, "it was just the color of a meal bag, and looked as if it was made before the flood."

That night Louise took her book, and sat

looking very intently into the bright wood fire, which was cheerfully blazing on the hearth.

Mrs. Merton perceived that some subject busily occupied her, as she paid no attention to what was passing around her. After a while, looking up and seeing that she was alone with her mother, she asked abruptly, "How much does a cloak cost?"

Mrs. Merton smiled, as she answered, "That depends very much upon the quality and size of it."

"Well, mother, I'll tell you my secret," said Louise, after a short pause, and sighing at the importance of the subject. "I've been thinking about Mr. S.'s old coat; and if Agnes will consent, I should like to buy him a new cloak with the money we get for our quilt."

Mrs. Merton did not discourage her little daughter, by telling her that a cloak would cost much more than they could command; but she told her she might see what Agnes would say,

"and in the mean time," continued she, "I will talk with your father about it."

This was quite encouragement enough to set the affectionate heart of Louise beating rapidly. The thought of providing a warm garment for one she so much loved and respected, delighted her. The next morning she confided her important secret to her friend, who readily and joyfully fell into the plan. It gave a definiteness to their charity that pleased her.

"Yes," said she, "I should like it so much, because then we shall know just what becomes of our money; and when Mr. S. wears it, how happy we shall feel that we have made him so comfortable!"

"And," responded Louise, "he'll wonder so where it came from, for I wouldn't have him know on any account who gave it to him; though as he is now our Sabbath school teacher, I think it is perfectly proper that we should make him a present."

"We never can help his finding it out, and I

think it would be better to write a little note with it, and tell him who gave it to him."

"O, no!" replied Louise; "I wouldn't do that; I planned it all out last night. When the cloak is purchased, you and I will go into his room when he is absent, and put it on his bed; and we'll write on a card, 'Mr. S., from a friend.'"

"But here are two friends," said Agnes, "and that would be telling a lie."

Louise looked serious for a moment, as the thought of deceiving passed through her mind. "O, well," said she, cheerfully, "you may call it all your present. Have you any objection to that?"

Agnes replied, "I do not think that it would be quite right; but we shall have time to settle it when the cloak is bought." So they resolved to keep the whole affair quite secret for the present. During the day Mrs. Merton talked with her husband about the price of a cloak, and told him of the desire of Louise to procure one for Mr. S.

Dr. Merton highly approved the undertaking, but said it would be best to ascertain, in some way, if Mr. S. had no other garment; and if he had not, then he himself would take Louise and Agnes to the village, and inquire of the tailor about the expense. "It is best," continued he, "to let *them* do the business; but how much money have they?"

Mrs. Merton smiled as she replied, "They have *no money* yet; they have a quilt nearly completed."

"And how much is the quilt worth?"

Mrs. Merton replied that she really could not judge; she should think at the most not more than two dollars. "But," continued she, seeing her husband looked disappointed, "they have no idea of the price of a cloak; and as they have really been very persevering, I feel sad at the thought of disappointing them."

"Well," said the doctor, "he must have a cloak; that is, if he has not one already. But I can't see how they will be able to accomplish it."

Louise and Agnes, now that they had a definite object in view, concluded not only to work on Wednesday afternoon, but to obtain leave for Agnes to spend the night with her friend, that they might sew upon it in the evening. This favor was readily granted; and they were so industrious, that, when they folded their work for the night, they found that in another hour they could probably complete it. Saturday afternoon arrived; the quilt was done, and admired by all the family. The little girls had spread it upon the bed, had walked across the room to view it from a distance, and had gradually advanced nearer to see it in every light. Indeed, it was a very pretty one; the dark and light pieces were equally distributed over the whole, and formed a very good contrast. But the best of all was the sweet reflection that they had taken every stitch themselves; having concluded at their second meeting to make the blocks of a different pattern, they had laid aside what little had been done at the first.

While the quilt was still spread out, Dr. Merton came in to look for Louise, and admired their work to their hearts' content. "But," said he, taking a hand of each, while a tear of affection was in his eye, "I am best pleased that my little girls have exhibited so much perseverance from the desire to do good." Then giving each a kiss, he told them he was going to the village to do a little business, and he added, smiling, "I should like your advice, and you may go too. Kate is already harnessed, so get ready at once." The eyes of the little girls actually sparkled with delight, as they ran to prepare for the ride.

When they arrived at the village, Dr. Merton went directly to the tailor's, and taking them into the store, inquired of Mr. Jones what materials he had suitable for a warm winter cloak.

Mr. Jones looked inquiringly at the children, as if to ask whether it was a child's cloak that was needed. Dr. Merton said, "Camlet or plaid;

you want something that will wear well, I suppose," turning to the little girls.

So Mr. Jones took down piece after piece, and laid them upon the counter, taking up a corner of each as he did so, and snapping it in his hand to try its firmness. At last he took down one roll of cloth from a high shelf, which Agnes and Louise thought just the thing.

Dr. Merton, having looked at all the cloths, approved their choice, as it was not only a pretty pattern, but of good quality. "And now, Mr. Jones," said he, "these little girls wish to buy a cloak. How much shall you ask for one of this cloth, lined with green baize, and a velvet collar? I suppose you will want a velvet collar," turning to Louise.

"O, yes, sir," she replied.

Mr. Jones looked as if he did not at all understand the proceedings. "The cloak," continued Dr. Merton, "is to be made to fit me; perhaps not quite so long" — looking down.

The tailor took out his pencil, and began to

make his calculations, while Louise and Agnes stood in breathless anticipation, longing, yet almost fearing, to know the result. They could hear him say to himself as he wrote, —

"12 yards camlet plaid, 42 cents per yard, $5,04; 6 do. green baize, 50 cents per yard, $3,00."

Then looking up, he said, "Is it to give in charity? If so, I suppose I shall have to throw in something towards the making."

Louise blushed deeply, and looked at her father, who replied, —

"Well, Louise, I can tell so much;" then turning to Mr. Jones, he said, "Yes, sir; these little girls have a friend who is in need of a cloak, and they are trying to get him one with their own earnings."

A sudden thought seemed to dart through the mind of the tailor, for he turned away abruptly, and went to an inner room, and brought out *the old coat* which had so excited the compassion of Louise. Holding it up, he said, "Just

see this coat! Mr. S., one of the holiest men on earth, came yesterday for me to let out the sleeves. He says it will do for him another winter very well. I shan't charge him a cent for repairing it, but I wish somebody would give *him* a cloak."

Dr. Merton could not help smiling as he looked at Louise. There she stood, blushing, smiling, and half crying at the same moment; smiling that their conduct should be approved even by Mr. Jones — sorrowing that their secret should be discovered.

"Well," continued Mr. Jones, evidently satisfied with his observations, "I shan't charge you much for the making. Let me see," looking at his memorandum, "I think I can afford you a good cloak, with a square, full cape, for ten dollars."

"Ten dollars!" exclaimed Louise, in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Mr. Jones, not understanding her surprise; "I know it's cheap, but I can

guess for whom it is, and I shan't charge so much for it."

Dr. Merton understood too well their disappointment, and, taking out his watch, said, "You can decide with your mother at home, and I will let Mr. Jones know at another time." Then thanking him for so favorable an offer, — which was indeed lower than he had anticipated, — and requesting him to say nothing about it, he led the little girls to the chaise, and started for home. They had not gone many rods before Louise was sobbing aloud, and Agnes trying hard to restrain her tears. Dr. Merton took the hand of Louise, and tried to soothe and encourage her.

"Did the cloak cost more than you expected?" asked he, turning to Agnes.

"O, yes, sir," replied she, "a great deal more!"

"I am afraid," sobbed Louise, "that we can never get it. O, I did not think it would be so much."

"My little daughter had better try to restrain

her grief," said the good doctor, gently. "You have been very industrious, and perhaps you will have help. But supposing I should lend you some money to make up the sum requisite — would you be as persevering till you had paid me?"

The effect of this proposition was electrical. The tears were all dried. Happy smiles danced around her little mouth, and, shaking back her curls, she said, "O father! will you? We will pay you — won't we, Agnes?"

"Yes," replied Agnes; "we can make another quilt;" and by the time our heroines arrived at home, they were as confident of success as ever.

ARCHER.RUSSELL

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE FOLKS ENCOURAGED.

Sale and Return of the Quilt three Times. — Invisible Pincushions. — The Watch Chain. — Presentation of the Cloak. — Devout Gratitude, and Acknowledgment.

On Monday commenced a series of public meetings, which called together Christians and scholars from all the neighboring towns. Several well-known benevolent ladies were expected to be present, and Mrs. Merton thought this would be a favorable opportunity to sell the quilt.

On Tuesday afternoon Louise was very much surprised and pleased at receiving a message to call at the house of Mrs. Fuller, and bring with her any articles which were for sale in "The United States Sewing Society." She ran to ask leave of her mother, who did not look as much surprised as she had expected, but said, "You

may put on your coat and bonnet, my dear, while I fold the quilt nicely in a towel."

"I do wish Agnes were here to go with me," said Louise; and before she had finished speaking, Agnes' step was heard upon the stairs. Taking the bundle, they started together for the house of Mr. Fuller. As they approached, Louise grew quite fluttered, and her heart beat faster and faster. She was very diffident, and, while much pleased to go, it was a real trial for her to appear before strangers. Agnes seemed to have more confidence, and talked pleasantly, holding Louise firmly by the hand, and trying to cheer her.

"I am so glad you happened to come over just as you did," said Louise. "I don't believe I should have dared to go in alone."

Ellen was nowhere in sight; so they rung the door bell, and were soon shown into the parlor, where sat a number of ladies, waiting for tea.

Louise saw at a glance that Mrs. Fuller was

not present, and that the ladies were all strangers to her. There she stood at the door, with eyes cast down, blushing painfully. Agnes, feeling that she had not been invited, stood just behind her. But she was not suffered to stand there long. A very kind voice said, —

"O, here are the little girls with the quilt. Come to me, my dear."

That voice, which so often spoke comfort and consolation to the afflicted, has long ago been tuned to everlasting songs, before the throne of God — but Louise will never, never forget it. She felt sure she had one friend present, and instantly walking across the room, placed her little hand in the one so kindly extended to receive it. Agnes followed; and while one of the ladies unpinned the towel containing the quilt, the children were beginning to feel quite at home with their new friend. She had given them each a kiss, but seemed to be particularly interested in Louise, who really looked very engaging, as she stood with her hand in that of

Miss C., and answered her questions with a mixture of confidence and diffidence.

The ladies then arose to look at the work, praising the evenness of the stitches, and the great neatness and taste with which the squares were matched together.

"I really should like to keep it as a curiosity," whispered Miss C. to a lady standing by her and holding one corner of the quilt, "but I suppose it would be a greater help to them for me to return it." Then, taking out her purse, she put a bill into the hand of Louise, and said, "I am so pleased with your benevolent design, my dear children, that I shall buy the quilt of you and return it, that you may sell it again, as I have no doubt you will be able to do."

"I thank you! *I thank you!*" was all the children could say, though their hearts were full; but Miss C. needed no more; their happy countenances expressed more than words could have conveyed. She handed them the quilt, which

one of the ladies had kindly pinned up for them; and then, seeing it would be a relief to them to be alone, she kissed them, and bade them good by.

Eternity alone can tell the influence of that one kind act, kindly performed, upon the heart of Louise. In after years, the remembrance of it often encouraged her in her efforts to do good, and checked her when weary in her Master's service.

As soon as they were out of the gate, our young friends ran every step of the way home; and Mrs. Merton, who saw them coming, anticipated the happy result of their visit.

"See here, mother," exclaimed Louise, bursting into the room, while Agnes followed with the bundle. "She has given us this, and the quilt back, too. I have not stopped to see how much it is, I was in such a hurry to tell you. O, Agnes, look! it is three dollars!" And now, free from restraint, the friends poured out all their joy, in which Mrs. Merton heartily united.

Louise jumped and danced in the excess of her emotion; but Agnes, being very impatient to communicate the good news to her mother, soon took her leave, carrying with her the quilt, which Mrs. Lovell had not seen since it was completed.

The next morning, before Louise had finished making her bed, Agnes came running in, bringing the towel which had contained their work, and laid upon the table two bills and some silver. She had not yet spoken one word, and her companion looked at her with astonishment.

"I have sold the quilt twice more," at length said Agnes, in reply to the wonder expressed in the countenance of Louise — "once for three dollars, and once for two and a half; so now we have eight dollars fifty cents; and there are two ladies at our house who will buy '*invisible*' pin-cushions, if we can make them this afternoon."

"I can! *I can!*" joyfully replied Louise; "you know aunt Maria gave me the pattern,

and taught me to make them. But who bought the quilt?"

"Why, I went home, and found mother in the parlor with ever so many ladies and gentlemen, and I told mother all about our going to Mrs. Fuller's, and selling the quilt to that beautiful lady; and then Mrs. R. asked me ever so many questions. I told her, though I was the president, I never should have done any thing without you; and that's true."

"O Agnes," said Louise, kissing her tenderly, "you know you have always been ready to deny yourself pleasure, that you might be at the society. But what else did they do?"

"Well, mother sent me out of the room; and now I know it was that she might tell her what we were trying to get; for when I went in again, Mrs. R. called me to her, and gave me this bill, and she told me to tell my young friend that she meant to do just as Miss C. had done — that she bought the quilt to encourage us, because we had been so persevering."

"And who bought it next?" asked Louise, smiling.

"Mother," replied Agnes. "Just as I was coming over to tell you, she came into my room, and told me she was going to buy it, that I might always remember how happy it had made me to spend my time usefully and charitably."

Louise ran down stairs with Agnes to tell her mother of their success, and to beg of her some bits of silk, that they might be all ready to commence their "invisibles" at noon. Little Sarah could cover the pasteboards very neatly, having been taught by her aunt, and was very happy in being permitted to help her sister.

In the course of the afternoon the three little girls made four pincushions, though, to be sure, they were not entirely "*invisible;*" and it would have been quite a pity if they had been so — made as they were of bits of Mrs. Merton's brown silk pelisse, and stuck full of pins supplied from her work basket.

Two of these Agnes took home, and the oth-

ers were purchased by a lady and gentleman who were visiting at Dr. Merton's, and who had become much interested in the proceedings of the little society. The lady paid twelve and a half cents, the price of the pincushion, and then presented Louise fifty cents, to show her interest in the object; and the gentleman, when he paid for his, told her he was in need of a watch chain, and if she would make one, he would call and take it the following week, when he should pass through the town. He then gave her money to buy the materials, and told her he would pay her half a dollar when the chain was completed.

Louise then counted her money:

Pay for quilt, ...	$8 50
" " pincushions, ...	50
Presented, ...	50
	$9 50

and to her great delight found that when the chain was made, and paid for, the whole sum would be obtained.

Dr. Merton said he thought the United States Sewing Society was in a very flourishing condition, and promised that he would go to the village after dinner and order the cloak, and also buy the braid for the chain.

The day at length arrived when the long-hoped-for garment was to be completed. The chain was finished and paid for; the ten dollars were all ready to pay the bill, as soon as presented; the presentation card had long been written by Louise in her best hand, —

"Will Mr. S. please accept the Cloak accompanying this Card?"

The old coat had previously been sent home, and, as Mr. S. said, "would do good service yet." Every thing happened right. The good man held a meeting in a little school house one evening in a week. The cloak came just after he had gone, and the girls had ample time to examine it. Louise begged her father to try it on, that they might see how it fitted; and they walked

around and around him, more pleased than those can imagine who know not the pleasure of giving what they have earned by self-denying labor. They realized the truth of the divine words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A string was passed through the card, and tied to the large eye which confined the cloak in front. They then carried it in triumph to the chamber occupied by Mr. S., and arranged it upon the bed, so that he might discover it as soon as he entered the room. A few moments were spent in wondering what he would say, and hoping he would not find out who gave it to him, and then they retired to bed — Agnes having permission to pass the night with her friend.

The room in which they slept was adjoining that occupied by Mr. S., and the children hoped they should be awake when he returned. Nor were they disappointed, for they had just said their prayers, and gone to bed, when they heard the outer door open and shut. His voice was

heard asking Nancy for a light, who could hardly refrain from giving him a hint of what was going on. Then he was on his way to his room, and the listeners almost held their breath lest they should lose one sound. They heard him set down the lamp, open the closet door, hang up his coat and hat, throw in his boots, and then, with his slippers, walk across the room to his bed, as if he had just seen the cloak.

"Who's here?" said he aloud; then, as if he had just discovered the card, "Ah! what's this?" reading, —

"Will Mr. S. please accept the Cloak accompanying this Card?"

"That will I; with many thanks to the friend who presented it in so delicate a manner."

Louise and Agnes had involuntarily started up in bed to hear more distinctly, and now they thought he was trying it on, for he walked to the part of the room where the glass hung, and said, "A nice cloak it is too!" and then went

down to the parlor to exhibit his present — which, of course, was duly admired, as if they had never seen it before.

Our young friends were just composing themselves to sleep, when the voice of prayer awakened their attention. It was the good man, pouring out his whole soul in gratitude to God for this fresh token of his love. "O thou beneficent Being, who art ever mindful of the wants of thy creatures, and who dost not allow a sparrow to fall to the ground without thy notice, be pleased to accept the humble and hearty thanks of thy servant before thee for this fresh experience of thy goodness. The hearts of all men are in thy hands, and are turned by thee to work out thy purposes. I thank thee that thou dost move thy people to administer aid to the needy, thus bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ; and especially that thou hast looked with tender mercy upon the necessities of thy servant, and hast graciously inclined the benevolent to relieve

them. Pour out abundantly, I beseech thee, spiritual blessings in return for temporal favors, that they may realize thy promise, 'He that watereth shall be watered himself.' Water them richly with heavenly dews, and prepare them for a seat at thy right hand, where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

To this heart-felt prayer the little girls listened in breathless silence, interrupted only by the sobs of Louise; and it was not until some time after the prayer was concluded that Agnes could succeed in any measure in soothing her.

"O," said she, trying to compose herself to speak, "what a blessing to have *such* a man pray for us! I feel that God will answer such a prayer. Let us pray again, dear Agnes, that we may indeed be fitted for that blest abode." They clasped their hands, while Louise implored anew the favor of God for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ; after which they fell quietly asleep.

The next day Mr. S. certainly looked very much pleased, as he met the little girls on their

way home from school. It was very cold, and as he approached them, he folded the cloak closely around him, as if to say, "See what a warm cloak I have, and how comfortable I am in it."

After he had passed, Louise stopped and looked around, and as she did so, saw that he also had stopped, while a smile of such peculiar meaning played around his mouth, that the poor girl was covered with blushes, at the thought that he had by some means become possessed of their secret.

It was not, however, until after the lapse of some years, that our heroines were sure that they had been discovered as the donors, when a letter was received from Mr. S., dated Constantinople, containing a message to his generous little friends, that the garment furnished by them had been his constant companion since he left America, being his cloak by day and his blanket by night.

CHAPTER V.

THE SLEIGH RIDE.

The Young Collegian's Return. — A Chat by the Fireside. — Christmas. — Remembering the Poor.

Christmas and New Year were at hand. William was about to return home, for a long vacation. Louise and Sarah were anticipating a fine time, riding and walking with their dear brother, hearing his pleasant stories, and receiving aid in their studies.

Louise had been knitting a pair of socks, and Sarah had made him a pincushion, which were intended for Christmas gifts.

On Monday, the week before Christmas, Dr. Merton received a letter from his son, informing him that the term closed on Wednesday, and he should probably be able to reach home on Friday afternoon. Louise and her sister had prepared

cards to hang around their necks, and had just put them on when the stage coach was heard; and in another minute William was in his mother's arms, while father and sisters stood eager to welcome him home, and to give him the warm kisses of sisterly affection.

"O, how cheerful and pleasant this is!" said William, entering the parlor, and approaching the bright, blazing fire, which diffused a genial warmth through the room. "I have felt nothing so comfortable since I left 'home, sweet home'! But how you have grown, Louise! and you too, 'sis.'" Then, for the first time, noticing the cards of welcome, he thanked each by a silent kiss. Had he spoken, he would have betrayed his emotion at so delicate a mark of affection; and to have done so would have been, in his estimation, quite beneath a Junior in College.

Supper was ready. Mr. S. came in, and was introduced to the newly-arrived and dearly-beloved member of the family. Behold them now seated at the table; Mrs. Merton opposite the

urn; William occupying a place between his sisters, they having in a low voice begged this privilege of their mother.

The devoted father besought a blessing upon their food, after which William did full justice to the nice home-made bread and butter, the preserved damsons, which he said he should recognize as his mother's in any quarter of the globe, and last, but not least, the Washington pie, made in honor of his expected arrival, to which he took care to pay great respect, while Louise laughingly said, "William has not forgotten his favorite pie."

At last supper was concluded. Nancy took away the urn, while Sarah passed the Bible to her father, and all put themselves in a reverent posture for prayers.

William felt the solemnity of the occasion. There was nothing formal connected with it. Dr. Merton read a portion of Scripture, after which he gave thanks for mercies received, and supplicated the continued favor of God. Nor

did he forget to notice the kind Providence which had restored their absent son to his home in health and prosperity; and earnestly prayed that the season of his continuing among them might be one of profit to his soul.

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,"

said William, as, after a short pause, his father began to put together the brands which had fallen upon the hearth, "and let us have a social chat of neighbors and friends."

He then inquired of his sisters about the Lovells, the Fullers, &c., &c., which inquiries were soon answered, as it was a quiet village, and little change had taken place.

But there were some items of intelligence communicated by Mrs. Merton which interested him deeply. "Old Colonel Brown" was dead, having been eager to the last to relate the story, that he had *fought, bled, and died* on Bunker Hill! Sally had gone to live with her grandmother, and to take care of her.

"I must go and see her," said William. "I wonder if she'll know me."

"O, yes," replied Louise; "she says she misses you very much." And then a plan was proposed that Mrs. Merton, William, and the two girls should go and take tea with the old lady, they of course carrying all the provision with them.

Dr. Merton, who had been called away, now returned, and the remainder of the evening was spent in conversing in regard to college life and college duties.

Day after day passed in the same delightful interchange of kindness and affection.

It was Christmas. The weather was clear and cold, but the sun was shining pleasantly, making the icy trees and bushes glitter as if hung with jewels.

The sleighs were seen flying in every direction, and the bells, making merry music, seemed to invite our little friends to a sleigh ride. At least so they thought, as they stood at the

window watching their brother, who threw shovel after shovel full of snow from the path he was making to the gate.

Soon after, Dr. Merton entered the room, followed by William. They were talking of a poor woman who lived in a remote part of the village, and who had lost her husband a few weeks previous.

Dr. Merton wished William to carry her a basket of provision, and said, "I suppose your sisters will not object to accompanying you, judging from their eager countenances."

"Well, girls," said William, laughing, "may I have the pleasure of your company in a sleigh ride?"

"O, that is just what we should like," cried they.

"Go and get ready, then; but be sure to wrap up warm. I don't like to have little girls crying with cold fingers," continued he, looking mischievously at Sarah, who showed by her blushes that she understood to what he alluded.

"May Agnes and Lucy go with us?" earnestly cried Louise, running back into the room, with her pelisse half on.

"Yes, yes, the more the merrier," replied William, good humoredly; and Louise hurried away to have her friends ready when her brother called for them.

"Shall we go the upper road, or the lower?" asked William.

They all decided that the lower was the pleasanter. So off they went the lower road.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POOR WIDOW.

Her Cottage. — Her Presents. — Clothing her Twins. — Another Charitable Visit to her House. — The Namesake. — Dr. Merton's Proposition. — Her overpowering Emotion.

After a fine ride of half an hour, they stopped at a low house, or rather hovel, — for it hardly deserved the name of a house, — with a piece of funnel projecting through the roof to serve the purpose of a chimney. Originally there had been but one room; but as they entered they saw there was a thin board partition running across, to separate the sleeping apartment from that which contained the stove and other utensils for cooking.

Mrs. Snow was sitting upon the side of a rickety bed, upon which lay two infants which she was trying to soothe to sleep.

William opened the door for the little girls, and then stepped back to tie his horse. The poor woman put forward a chair and a stool, which were all the seats the apartment afforded; but the children were too eager to see the twins to think of sitting; and sorrowful as was Mrs. Snow, she could hardly help smiling with motherly pride, as she heard their abundant words of endearment.

"How old are they?" asked Louise, turning to Mrs. Snow.

"Just one fortnight, last Tuesday, miss," was the sad reply; "and when I think how proud he that's gone would have been of the poor little creatures," — here a burst of tears interrupted her; and while she was still weeping, William came in, bringing a large basket, which he carried directly through into the back room, and commenced taking out the bundles and laying them upon the table. He had previously been there with his father, and had become much interested in the afflicted woman and her fatherless babes.

Mrs. Snow tried to shake off the remembrance of her grief, and going to the table, seemed waiting to find words to express her gratitude; but William gave her no time.

Holding out a bundle, he said, "This is oatmeal, to be made into gruel. Mother wants you to take a great deal of it. She says it will be very nourishing to you and the babes. I believe that is the right message," continued he, slightly blushing at what he had said. "And this is rice. That little bundle is tea, which father says you must be careful not to take strong in the present state of your nerves. I don't remember the rest," continued he, interrupting her again, "but you'll find them out."

"O," said Mrs. Snow, "how can I thank your good father and mother for all they have done for me?"

"They will like it best if you do not thank them at all. But how are the babies?"

While this conversation had been going on, Louise and Agnes had each ventured to take

one of the sleeping infants, and now looked perfectly happy, as they sat upon the bed holding them in their arms.

"There," said William, "is work enough for you, Louise! Making clothes for the baby would be much better than working over your dolls."

"O, yes, *yes*," cried Louise, with an earnest look at Agnes, "so we will!"

Sarah and Lucy begged to be allowed to hold the little babies just one minute, to which Mrs. Snow readily consented, after many injunctions from Agnes and Louise to be very, *very* careful.

William, having told Mrs. Snow she must take care of herself for the sake of her little ones, knowing that to be the most powerful motive he could use, took his leave, the children promising "to come again very soon."

And now Louise had an object, and she could neither think nor talk of any thing else. The little Society was again to be put in operation; but as the case was urgent, the children not having suitable clothing, they determined to devote all

their leisure, through the Christmas holidays, to making a complete suit for each of these needy babes.

"How very fortunate," said Louise, "that all my Christmas gifts were money. Now I can buy what I please. O, I had rather have money than all the toys in the world, because it is so useful. But which do you choose, the little boy or girl?"

"Why," replied Agnes, "they must be dressed alike, now they are small."

When they reached home, Louise could not wait to hear Sarah relate to her mother what they had seen, but ran hastily to her room, where, in an upper drawer in the closet, she remembered to have seen the little shirts and dresses which had been made for Emily, the heathen child, and which she determined, with her mother's permission, to give to Mrs. Snow's baby. In her haste she pulled out all the contents of the drawer, throwing them upon the floor, and was beginning to feel impatient that

she could not find what she wished, when she discovered dresses, shirts, and caps, rolled in a bundle, just as she had left them years before. Mrs. Merton looked much astonished as Louise came running into the room, with her arms and apron full of clothes.

"Mother, are these my own? May I do what I please with them?"

"Yes, my dear child," replied Mrs. Merton, smiling, as she saw the treasure so earnestly besought. "They are yours; and I can already imagine to what use you have appropriated them. I think," continued she, taking up a little dress, "with my help you can alter this so that it will do very well for the present purpose; but I see Sarah wants to take a part with you."

"O, yes, mamma;" cried Sarah, joyfully, "you know that I can sew very neatly," while her countenance brightened at the idea of being useful to the twin babes.

"Well, my dear," said her mother, "you shall have an opportunity to do your part."

The following morning Louise and her sister were sitting in one corner of the room, with a large basket on the floor before them, containing the various articles fitted by their mother the evening previous, when Louise suddenly exclaimed, "I will ask Mrs. Snow to name her *Louise*, and then I shall feel that she really belongs to me."

Sarah was occupied in making napkins, ten of which her mother had cut from an old linen sheet, and Louise was altering a little pink frock, to suit her adopted daughter, as she playfully called her *protégée.*

In the course of the forenoon Agnes came in, and was surprised to find her friends had already accomplished so much, but Louise soon explained to her that most of the garments were already made, and only required to be slightly altered, but seeing Agnes looked disappointed, she said, "When these are ready, I will ask leave of mother to go and help you. Perhaps *I* can stay all night, and then we can sew a great deal in the evening."

This promise was fulfilled, and the obliging little girl helped her friend alter and repair, until they prepared quite a tidy wardrobe for young Master Snow. O, how happy they were, as they started, each with a basket upon her arm, for the poor hovel! No visit to a palace could have afforded them such pure enjoyment.

Dr. Merton was going in the sleigh to a house a short distance from Mrs. Snow's, when the little girls were to get out and walk on, the doctor promising to call for them when he had concluded his business. Our heroines found the poor woman much stronger than at their last visit, though she still seemed sad, *very* sad; but as they unfolded the contents of their baskets, they were richly repaid for all they had done, by the look of grateful joy with which she regarded them.

For one moment she struggled hard to suppress her feelings, and then said in a subdued voice, "God has not forgotten the widow and the fatherless."

"No," replied Louise, "the Bible says he will never forsake those who put their trust in him; and I know, if you pray to him, he will take care of you and the dear babes."

"O," said the bereaved woman, weeping aloud, "you speak just like my poor Joseph, that's dead and gone. He often, very often, said to me, when I was worrying about this or the other, and not knowing where we should get our next meal, 'My dear Betsy,' — and he'd speak it so pretty, miss, — 'why can't you trust in God? We have never yet wanted food, though we have often eaten our last morsel!' O! if he could have been spared to me!" and overcome by her recollections of the past, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

The girls were much affected. Louise silently took the babe, while Agnes folded up the little clothes, and laid them neatly upon the set of drawers which stood at the foot of the bed.

After a few minutes Mrs. Snow became more

composed, and listened to the conversation between the friends.

"I think," said Louise, "that my baby is the prettier;" then looking up, she asked, "What is this baby's name?"

"Well, miss, I have not thought much about a name for the poor little girl yet, but I shall call the boy Joseph, for his father," and she sighed heavily.

"I should like," continued Louise, feeling that she was asking a great favor, "to have you call her *Louise Merton*."

"Indeed, miss, and would you be willing to have the poor little thing called by your name?"

"O, yes," replied Louise, her countenance showing that she should not only be willing, but very glad.

"Then," continued Mrs. Snow, "if your mother consents, that shall be her name."

The young girl pressed her protégée close in her arms, as if she felt that she had acquired a new right to her, which the mother noticed, and

inwardly thanked God for raising up such kind friends for her babes.

Agnes was not less interested in the little Joseph, and resolved, with her mother's consent, to adopt him, as Louise had done the girl.

Just then Dr. Merton's sleigh bells were heard, and in a minute he entered the room, bringing a bag of meal. He inquired tenderly if she was at present in need of any thing, and then telling Louise and Agnes he had a plan he knew would please them, stood folding the bag, which Mrs. Snow had emptied.

"Did you know that Mrs. Phipps's daughter was about to be married?" asked he of the poor woman, after a short pause.

"I didn't know she thought of it at present."

"Yes, she intends to leave home in about a fortnight; that is, if she can make any satisfactory arrangements for her mother. You know the old lady is very feeble, and requires kind care and attention," continued the doctor, after waiting a moment for her to reply; "and she

sent for me to see if I could think of any one who would come and take her daughter's place."

Mrs. Snow clasped her hands with a quick, convulsive motion, but said nothing.

"I told her that I could think of just such a one as would suit her, but there was one serious objection to it."

Here the poor woman leaned back against the wall, and sighed heavily.

"Or, rather," added he, smiling, "I feared she might consider it as such — that the one I should earnestly recommend, had a pair of beautiful twins a month old."

"O," exclaimed Mrs. Snow, "what did she say?" while the tears started from her eyes.

"That it would be no objection at all, if they had a good mother; and as I soon satisfied her on that ground, we are only waiting for your consent to conclude the bargain."

Dr. Merton had endeavored to impart this good news with due caution, but he was not

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prepared for such an excess of emotion as followed his last words: indeed, one could hardly be expected to anticipate it who had never been reduced to such utter destitution.

There she sat, silently clasping her hands, her countenance growing every moment more and more pale, until the doctor, seeing she was about to faint, suddenly started, and saved her from falling to the floor, telling Louise to run for some water. A few drops sprinkled in her face revived her, and she burst into tears.

As soon as she could speak, she said, with great solemnity, "I never mean to doubt again."

"To doubt what, my good woman?"

"Why, I mean," continued she, "I never mean to doubt that God will take care of me, and these babes he has intrusted to my care. O, how miserable I have been at the thought of being obliged to be separated from them that I might work for their support; but now — O, how sinful I have been to doubt his goodness!"

"Trust in God always," said the doctor, try-

ing to suppress his emotion. "He will never forsake those that put their trust in him."

"Come, girls," said he, after a short pause, "you must give up your babies. I am not at all sure, Mrs. Snow, but when you get into our neighborhood, you'll have more help than you'll care about."

Louise thanked her father, by a look of dutiful affection, as she said, "This is *really* my baby, father; its name is Louise Merton."

"If your mother is willing," explained Mrs. Snow, fearing it might be thought she had taken too great a liberty.

The father smiled his approbation, and they took their leave, the doctor promising to bring Mary Phipps to see her in a day or two, that they might talk over and conclude the arrangement.

To those interested in the future history of Mrs. Snow, I will just say, that in due time she removed to the neat cottage occupied by the old lady Phipps; where, by her neatness, ac-

tivity, and, above all, her devoted piety, (for she came out of the furnace of affliction refined and purified,) she gained many warm friends for herself and children. Mrs. Phipps often thanked God for having provided so kindly for her in her old age; and, indeed, it was hard to say which she most loved, her own grandchildren, or the little twins brought up under her roof.

Louise and Agnes never lost their interest in their protégées, but did much toward clothing and educating them.

CHAPTER VII.

FAST FOR COLLEGES.

Interest of Dr. and Mrs. Merton in the Occasion. — The Public Meeting. — The welcome Letter. — The Promise fulfilled.

THE vacation had passed, and William had left his pleasant home to resume his studies.

The departure of a member of his family was always, with Dr. Merton, a solemn event. He never approved any trifling or merriment, when, for aught they knew, they might be taking their last farewell.

"Always part, my dear children," he said, "so that if in God's providence you are never allowed to meet again, the parting scene may not be a source of painful reflection."

So, when an absent member returned to the parental roof, his joy was chastened by the thought of God's preserving goodness.

It was now the third week in February. Notice had been given from the pulpit, on the preceding Sabbath, of the fast for colleges. There were to be meetings for prayer at two o'clock in the afternoon, and at seven in the evening.

To Dr. Merton this was a day of peculiar interest. The conversion of educated young men, who were soon to come forward into active life, and to exert an extended influence upon their country either for weal or woe, could not be regarded with indifference by a mind like his. He viewed them as an important part of the machinery of God's providence for the evangelization and salvation of the world. And now that he had a beloved son exposed to all the dangers and temptations of a college life, it is reasonable to suppose that his prayers would be more fervent, and that he would seek more earnestly the grace of God, that mighty shield, to be about them on every side to protect them from the fiery darts of the adversary; and that he would also implant in their hearts such a

zeal for God, and for the advancement of his kingdom, that in due time they might take their places upon the stage of life, thoroughly furnished for every good work. It was the custom in this eminently Christian family, not only to devote the services of morning and evening worship to this object, but to observe a special season in the middle of the day.

On the present occasion, all were deeply affected by the unction and fervor of the good man, as he wrestled for the soul of his absent son. His language seemed to be like that of Jacob of old, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

Louise sobbed aloud, while none were able entirely to restrain their emotion; but as they rose from prayer, their tears were dried. The countenance of the venerable father actually shone with holy joy. Every feature expressed an assurance of the blessing so long and so earnestly sought.

Deeply impressed with the importance of the

day with regard to their beloved William, these Christian parents devoted the entire morning to wrestling, fervent prayer in his behalf.

Louise had wandered about, looking in vain for her mother, until she approached the closet rendered sacred by hallowed associations. There she stopped and listened. She heard her mother praying for him who had so recently departed, that God would be merciful to his soul, while her voice was often interrupted with weeping, so that she was unable for a time to proceed.

Louise remembered how often she had knelt by the side of her dear, *dear* mother, and, with hands clasped in hers, had been dedicated to God, and divine favor implored for her. She listened until she could bear it no longer, and then retired to her room, and wept aloud.

But now the good man, whose closet had also witnessed the fervor of his prayers, felt that he was heard and answered; and when, in the afternoon meeting he made some remarks, which he followed by prayer, there was not one present

who did not feel his or her faith strengthened in the promises of God to his waiting people.

The following Tuesday, as Dr. Merton went out after breakfast, he requested Louise to call at the post office, on her return from school, as he should be engaged until dinner.

He returned, however, sooner than he expected, and was reading, by the window, when he saw his little girls running home, Louise holding Sarah by the hand, and trying to hurry her along. The cause of all this haste was soon apparent, for as she saw her father at the window, she waved her arm, to show that she had a letter for him, and soon opened the door, shouting, "A letter from William! a letter from William!"

The family were nearly all present as Dr. Merton took the letter, broke the seal, opened it, read a few words, and then burst into tears, and immediately retired to his study. He must for a time be alone with God.

Great anxiety was depicted upon the counte-

nances of all; but soon the study door was heard opening, when Mrs. Merton stepped quickly forward, and it was again closed. Not a word was spoken by those who remained, and soon the voice of praise was heard — praise for the salvation brought to their household!

The dinner bell rang, and the joyful parents took their seats at the table; but they seemed to forget that their food was before them. The good doctor took from his pocket the precious letter, and attempted to read it to his assembled family, but was soon so much overcome by gratitude and joy, as to be unable to proceed, and he silently handed the letter to Mr. S. to be finished.

An extract from this letter I am allowed to copy. It was as follows: —

"Beloved Parents:

"I have found my Saviour; I have found him to be precious. He has redeemed my soul from hell. He has bought me with his own

precious blood. He is mine, and I am his. O, how can it be that I have lived eighteen years, and have never known, never prized him till now? But I shall dwell with him forever. Eternity will be too short to utter all his praise. My life, my all, shall be devoted to his service. * * * * You will doubtless wish to know when I found this pearl of great price. Thursday morning, at college prayers, our good president made a few remarks upon the manner in which we should spend the day, and hoped we should remember that many Christians in all parts of the United States were engaged in prayer for us.

"With, alas! too many, this had no effect; and as there were no recitations, little parties of pleasure were projected to pass away the time. In several of these I was urged to unite; but I had no desire for pleasure. I wished to be alone; and as this could not easily be accomplished in my room, where the company of my roommate was passing in and out, I took my

hat, and went to a grove near the college buildings. I could not shake off the idea that my parents were praying for me; for *me*, who felt no disposition to pray for myself. I walked back and forth, feeling more and more unhappy every moment. At length a loud laugh from a company of students approaching, determined me also to seek for pleasure, to drown my misery; for miserable, indeed, I was — a wretch without hope of mercy. I turned to follow them, when an inward voice said to my soul, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit.' My anguish was greater than ever, and in my folly I wished that I had been a poor outcast — a heathen — any thing rather than what I was — a hardened child of many prayers. I had heard from my infancy the story of a Saviour's love, but I had never felt that I had any part in it, or that it particularly concerned me. Now, *now* for the first time, the idea of the Son of God dying on the cross — taking my sins — relieving me of this terrible load, and giving me a hope of escaping from the

condemnation I deserved for my sins, filled me with joy. The fall of man, the whole system of redemption, came up before my mind, as if I had never heard it before, and I was saved from despair only by having been so thoroughly taught from my childhood the distinguishing doctrines of the Bible. Alone — upon the ground — I fell upon my knees. I gave up all hope of saving myself, or paying for salvation by good works. I was rejoiced that I could do nothing, that all the glory of my salvation was my Redeemer's. I cried aloud in my agony that unless he would plead for me — intercede for the pardon of my sins — I must perish. But O, how can I describe the peace and joy which filled my soul! Jesus, my Saviour, appeared so lovely; the thought of heaven, as where I might see Jesus, and with tens of thousands redeemed like me from the thraldom of sin, was indescribably sweet. I wandered for hours through the grove. My whole life seemed wasted; precious time destroyed that might have been spent in adoring

the Redeemer. At length, wearied and faint in body, I returned to my room, and found, to my astonishment, that it was near four o'clock, the time appointed for public exercises, which I need not say was a precious season to my soul.

"I will only add that I have commenced a letter to my dear little sisters, dearer far than before, because they have souls with which to love the Saviour. I shall probably send it next week. I pray daily for them, that they may not waste the precious season of childhood and youth as I have done, but enter Wisdom's ways, which are 'ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'

Your dutiful son,

WILLIAM."

In connection with this account of William's conversion, I shall add a few words of his after life. He never ceased to give thanks to God for his undeserved, unspeakable mercy; and his desires were ardent that all might realize

the same blessing so abundantly bestowed upon him.

He felt, as he told one of his professors, an earnest desire for the souls of his classmates and unconverted friends, that they might, with him, swell louder and louder the anthem of the redeemed in heaven.

After a suitable preparation, he entered the gospel ministry, which he felt to be the most exalted station a mortal can attain; and he entered upon his work with the same zeal that had previously animated his soul.

After several years of labor in one of the Northern States, he was obliged, owing to the state of his lungs, to remove to the south, where he continued to preach for a time, when his voice entirely failed, and he reluctantly complied with the repeated advice of his physician, to give up for a time all employment.

After a few months, his general health being much improved, though unable to preach, he engaged in the arduous duties of a teacher in

one of the Southern States, where he has been eminently successful for many years.

How much encouragement to Christian parents may be derived from the history of William! "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is the promise of one whose word cannot be broken.

In childhood sow the precious seed, water it with your prayers and tears, and it will certainly yield an abundant harvest.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARITY SCHOOL.

Spring. — The Walk. — The Benevolent Design. — The Young Teachers. — The first Session. — The Happiness of useful Children. — The Misery of Guilt.

SPRING had come, with all its wealth of enjoyment. Birds and flowers — the balmy air, — the budding trees — the violet peeping up from its bed — the warbling of merry songsters returning with joy to their summer home — all proclaimed that spring had come.

Our young friend Louise went about the house singing, —

"The winter is over and gone,
The thrush whistles sweet on the spray,
The turtle breathes forth its soft moan,
The lark mounts and warbles away."

When she went to school, her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground, as she bounded

across the green, so full was she of buoyancy and life. And yet she dearly loved the winter The cheerful fireside, the social circle, the pleasant sleigh ride, and above all, the long winter evening, when she could enjoy the society of her dear mother, sometimes being permitted to read to her, and oftentimes listening to her instructive conversation, — all these were seasons to be fondly remembered.

But children always love the spring. They love to watch the busy birds, collecting twigs with which to weave their little nests; they love to wander over the fields from which the covering of the snow has so long excluded them, and to search for the earliest "wild-wood flowers;" they love to form their plans of summer sports and enjoyments.

One pleasant spring morning, Agnes called for Louise to take a walk before school; and as permission was soon obtained, they stood at the gate, quite undecided which way to direct their steps.

Louise was very fond of having an object in view. She always enjoyed a walk or a ride far better if there was an errand to be done for her mother, or there was some end to be attained by it. Now she thought it would be very pleasant to call at a small cottage owned by her father, and inquire about a child who was sick. So they wandered along, hand in hand, stopping every now and then to gather a violet from the bank, and talking about the family which they intended to call upon.

"I wonder," said Louise, "whether she will ever be able to go to school?"

"She looks so pale and thin," replied her companion, "I shouldn't think she would live a great while."

"But father thinks," responded Louise, "that she *will* be better, now it is warm weather."

"Here we are!" said Agnes; and they entered a small gate, and saw a young girl trying to cut and trim the rose bushes, which had grown so much the last season as nearly to close the

narrow walk to the house. During the winter these had been tied up, but now it was necessary to prune them. Louise asked Mary (the name of the girl) if she had any old hoops, and then explained to her how they might easily be fitted to keep the bushes straight and firm, and when painted white, or green, would add much to their beauty.

She then followed her friend into the cottage, the front of which was almost entirely concealed by the woodbine, which had been trained to run up to the roof.

Lydia, the sick girl, sat by the window, watching her sister at work in the front garden. She seemed very grateful to the young girls for calling to see her, and they, after remaining a few minutes, were obliged to hurry away to be in time for school.

Louise, who generally was very talkative, and sometimes claimed more than her share of the conversation when alone with her young companions, now answered but in monosyllables,

and once replied to another question so entirely different from what had been asked, that Agnes laughed aloud.

But Louise was absorbed in thought, though her plan was not yet definite enough for her to divulge, and she saw so many difficulties in the way that she determined to think more about it before she mentioned it to any one. It had, however, gained so much importance in her eyes by the time school was dismissed, that she determined to talk it over with Agnes. The plan was this — to keep a little school an hour or two on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, for the benefit of poor little children, whose parents could not afford to send them to a day school. There was then no school for the smaller poor children, except one kept for a few weeks in the year at the expense of the town.

But the questions, "Will our parents consent? where shall we obtain a room? and where get the scholars?" were what she wished Agnes to help her to solve.

"I know of a room," was her friend's reply, "in Woodbine Cottage, and then Lydia can attend."

"Yes," replied Louise; "seeing her, first made me think of it."

Consent to a trial of their skill as teachers was readily granted. The room was obtained, and on the Wednesday following there were thirteen girls and boys assembled, including Lydia, who sat in her rocking chair by the window, enjoying the scene vastly, if one might judge from her pale but happy countenance.

The school was opened by the children repeating in unison the Lord's prayer; and truly it was an interesting sight, those boys and girls, with closed eyes and folded hands, lisping its simple petitions.

At its close, Lydia, who had joined them while sitting, wiped away the tears which had gathered in her large, expressive eyes, and seemed to enter with much interest into the plan proposed by the young teachers. The children were

soon divided into classes — were heard to read and spell — a Bible story was told them by Louise, and then a short time was spent in singing, in which they might be said to unite with the spirit, though not entirely with the understanding, after which the school was dismissed until Saturday afternoon.

As the young teachers went home, they unconsciously walked with more dignity than usual, being deeply impressed with the responsibilities of their new situation; while they felt richly repaid for all their exertion in collecting a school (they having been around and obtained the glad consent of the parents) by seeing how much happiness they had conferred.

"Didn't we have a nice time?" said one of the little boys to his playfellow as they passed, when suddenly seeing his teachers close at hand, he stopped, and blushed, as if he had been guilty of a misdemeanor.

When Louise reached home, she found Sarah

weeping bitterly; and when her sister tried to soothe her, she gently pushed her away, saying, "I have told a lie — *I have told a lie!*"

Louise was very sorry for her, and could hardly keep from weeping herself, as she thought that she, too, had in times past often told that which was not exactly true. She took Sarah kindly by the hand, and said, "O sister! how could you do so?" when Mrs. Merton entered, and led the offending child to her room.

When left alone, Louise called to mind the last time she had told a lie. It was when she was eight years of age. How well she could remember every circumstance connected with it! She had had a fine apple given her, which her father expressly forbade her to eat, as she was not well; but when he had gone away she had told Nancy that her father had given her permission to eat it, after she had learned her lesson. The girl, not having heard any thing to the contrary, gave it to her; and when in the evening she was quite feverish, her father asked

if she had eaten the apple, she was frightened, and denied that she had done so. She soon grew so much worse, further inquiry was made as to her diet, and Nancy revealed the fact of her having eaten the apple.

Her good, kind father was cut to the heart at the sin of his little daughter; and as he had detected her several times in equivocating, though never before in an actual untruth, he determined to treat it with the seriousness so great an offence required.

A few days after, when she had recovered, no notice having been taken of her fault, Louise thought it had all passed by, when, after dinner, she was summoned to her father in the study. He did not look up as she entered, but was sitting in his arm chair, his eyes being shaded by his hand.

Louise went silently and took a seat upon the low cricket placed at his side. For some minutes she sat thus, and well could she recollect the feelings of sorrow and shame which

almost overpowered her, when her dear, kind father took her hand in his, and calmly talked with her of the nature of the sin she had committed, and then, taking a Bible from the table near him, read to her, as she stood before him, passage after passage of Holy Writ proclaiming God's righteous displeasure against those who depart from the truth, and the certainty of the endless punishment of all liars.

Taking his pen he wrote down the places where she would find these texts in her own Bible, after which they knelt side by side, while the afflicted father earnestly implored pardon for the offence of his weeping, guilty child.

How solemn had been her resolutions during that prayer! how sincere her desires for help from above to conquer the sinful habit, and to become a truthful child! Vividly was the scene present before her. When they arose from prayer, her father repeated a part of what he had before said, and then expressed a strong hope that this would be the last offence of the kind; but

he added, that however painful it might be, it would become his duty, in case she should be guilty of the like again, to administer chastisement. Louise then took the paper and went to her room to commit the "texts" to memory, she having been forbidden to leave it, except to go to school, until called to tea.

From that time she could not remember that she had wilfully deceived, although, a few days after the events related, she had a very strong temptation to do so; but she had been enabled by divine grace to obtain a victory over herself. The joy she saw experienced by her parents deepened the powerful impression already produced, so that for many years she had been regarded by all her friends as a truth-loving child.

When Sarah appeared at supper with swollen eyes and flushed cheeks, her sister regarded her with feelings of great tenderness, mingled with sorrow. She knew that Sarah had humbly confessed her fault and had been forgiven by her

parents, while they had implored divine forgiveness. Louise determined to afford all the aid in her power to help her overcome so great a fault.

CHAPTER IX.

VISIT TO THE BEACH.

Louise's Project. — Her Letter. — Her Conquest of Herself. — Her Father's Decision. — Preparation. — The Party. — The Ride. — Her Impression from the Sea. — The Return.

It was June. The little school was in a prosperous condition; far more so than the most sanguine of its friends had dared to expect. It now numbered twenty scholars, which was as many as the room would accommodate. Lydia had nearly recovered, and was quite an assistance to her young teachers. Her character had grown mature by her long sickness and confinement to the society of older persons; so that by her good example, and eagerness to learn, she much diminished the labor of discipline in the school.

As vacation in the day school was now approaching, our little friends were beginning to

plan walks and rides, to be submitted to their parents for approval.

Louise had long felt a desire to visit the beach, and look out upon the mighty expanse of water, bounded only by the horizon. This was twenty miles distant; and indulgent as she knew her parents to be, she hardly expected they would approve of the project she had in view.

Her desire was to invite all her young companions and friends to go with her to the beach, expecting, of course, that their parents would accompany them. The more difficult of attainment, the more delightful the pleasure appeared to her; and at length, after lying awake several nights, and talking it over with Sarah in all its bearings, they resolved to draw up a petition to their father and mother, requesting their consent and sanction to the plan.

This was carried into effect the next day. Louise, after repeated trials, composed one which they thought would answer very well, and was as follows: —

"VERY DEAR AND INDULGENT PARENTS:

"We know that you like to please your children whenever you can, and it is proper; and so we have ventured to tell you our plan. We wish to invite all our little companions and friends to go with us to the beach, and spend the day among the rocks, and try to fish. If you think proper to gratify us in this, we shall be very, *very* happy, and shall try to show our gratitude by strict obedience to all your commands; but if you do not, we shall try to feel that it is all right, because we know that you love your children, and would consent if you could.

"Your affectionate children,

LOUISE MERTON,

SARAH E. MERTON."

This letter was laid upon their father's study table, and the girls walked about on tiptoe, as if fearful of disturbing him while reading it. Every time the door opened, they expected he

would come in and give them his answer; but when hour after hour passed away, and not a word was said upon the subject which wholly engrossed their thoughts, they felt sadly disappointed.

At last, Louise stole softly into the study, when her father was out, to see if her note had not been overlooked. It had been taken from the conspicuous situation in which she placed it, and was nowhere to be seen.

Dr. Merton seemed not to notice the eager, anxious looks of his little daughters at the tea table, but talked on the most indifferent subjects, while Louise and Sarah, who had no appetite, wondered at his taking tea with such evident relish.

Bed time came, and not a word had been said concerning the subject of their letter, and when Louise retired to her room she burst into tears. Nor did she try at all to restrain herself. She felt that she had been treated unkindly, and hard thoughts of her parents began to arise.

After weeping a long time, Louise, as usual, knelt to pray, and had just commenced her prayer, when the thought of the wicked feelings she had cherished toward her kind, indulgent parents, flashed upon her mind, and she started from her knees, saying aloud, "I can't pray. O, how naughty I have been! I don't dare to pray." Her tears flowed afresh, but this time she wept for sorrow on account of her sin, and soon she knelt, with a penitent heart, to pray for pardon.

Dr. Merton, who had read the note with great interest, on account of the dutiful spirit breathed in its lines, had shown it to their mother, and had at once determined, if practicable, to comply with their request. He had been as much engrossed in it as they could desire, but he did not wish to raise hopes to disappoint them; so he thought best to say nothing about it until he had ascertained from his neighbors, Mr. Lovell and Mr. Fuller, whether they would coöperate in the proposed visit. And now, en-

tirely ignorant of the conflict going on in the mind of his dear Louise, he had gone out for the purpose of calling upon them with reference to the ride to the beach.

The parents gave their hearty consent, and were glad of so good an opportunity to reward their children for their generally good conduct. And now came the bustle of preparation. "*Miracles*" were to be fried, hams and tongues boiled, bread and cake baked, sandwiches prepared, while the gentlemen had quite their part, in preparing carriages to transport so many, there being no stable at hand.

Dr. Merton had two horses, a carryall, sulky, and wagon; Mr. Lovell, one horse, a chaise, and wagon; Mr. Fuller, a horse and chaise. These carriages were all that would be necessary, and the requisite number of horses were hired from the neighbors.

They were to start at five in the morning, that they might have a long day before them — to carry their dinner to eat upon the rocks, in

full view of the ocean — to go out in a boat and fish — and to return in the evening. This was the plan.

Louise and her sister were so full of joy they could not compose themselves to sleep, though feeling the necessity of it, as they were to rise so early in the morning. Nancy, the faithful Nancy, had been made very happy by an invitation from Mrs. Merton to accompany them.

The confusion of fitting one child here and another there, of changing for a smaller one, of packing the numerous baskets containing the provision into the wagons, and of giving the children their papers of luncheon, was at last over, and they were fairly started for the beach.

I will not attempt to describe the various little adventures they met with by the way — the fright of the children as Mr. Lovell drove into the water, and the waves dashed against the carriage — the delight shown at their safe arrival, and at being allowed to get out and look around them.

Louise stood upon the beach speechless with ecstasy. With one hand half raised, and mouth open to inhale the refreshing breeze, she gazed with wonder and awe upon the scene before her. Not knowing or caring that her companions were wandering far away, she still looked, unable to turn her eyes from the glorious expanse of water, dashing and foaming against the rock-bound coast, and then gently breaking into waves at her feet.

Dr. Merton, who had missed her, approached without her being conscious that any one was near; and when he called her by name, she started suddenly, as if frightened, so entirely had she been absorbed in her own feelings.

Her father, seeing the deep impression made upon her mind by the scene before her, repeated the following sublime passages from Scripture: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in

scales, and the hills in a balance? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things." (Isaiah xl.)

"All these, my daughter, are the mighty works of God. How wonderful his condescension in allowing us to call him our heavenly Father!" Louise put her hand in his, and they walked on in silence. Her mind was overwrought with the excitement of the scene, with the noise of many waters, and it would have been a relief to her to have wept. Her father well understood her feelings, and he turned her attention by saying, suddenly, "Your mother will fear some accident has happened to you." And they quickened their pace until they joined the rest of their company.

Through the day, though Louise was, as she told her mother, very, *very* happy, yet she appeared thoughtful. She seemed to shrink from

the merry laugh of her companions, and to prefer being with her parents or entirely alone.

Dr. Merton led the children, one by one, to the top of a very high rock projecting over the sea; there, planting his foot firmly, he held them forward, that they might look over, and see the foaming and dashing of the waves against its base. He told them that, in a gale of wind, the waves would dash over and cover the tops of the high rocks, and would appear awfully grand and terrific.

The little girls shuddered as they looked, and all but Louise felt relieved to be lifted from the rocks; she felt as if she would be glad to stand and gaze forever.

At five o'clock they started for home, which they reached about nine, when our young travellers were glad to retire to rest, after thanking their parents again and again for giving them so much pleasure.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY CHANGE.

Resolutions of Louise and Agnes. — Parental Fidelity. — Mental Conflict. — Sweet Submission. — The two Sisters one in Christian Love.

Two years had passed since the events related in the last chapter. Louise and Agnes were now fourteen years of age, and were quite tall and womanly in their appearance.

Sarah was twelve, and was now a very pleasing, conscientious little girl. Between Louise and her sister there was the closest intimacy and affection, and the remark was often made that they were seldom seen separated. This was very delightful to their parents, who had always taken pains that their interests should not be at variance. Indeed, Dr. Merton used to say, "If there is any one thing I dote upon, it is that my children love one another."

Nothing of special moment had occurred in their quiet village; but now all were looking forward with interest, and many with anxiety, to a series of religious meetings to be held among them.

Several distinguished ministers were expected to be present, and it was hoped that much good might result, although Dr. Merton never fully approved of protracted meetings, nor of many of the measures adopted in them.

There had been, for several weeks, pleasing indications that the Spirit of the Lord was among them, enlivening the hearts of Christians, and quickening them to renewed watchfulness and prayer for the souls of the impenitent around them. Two or three, it was hoped, had already been turned from sin to holiness, and many more were anxiously inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Louise and Agnes were sitting together, one afternoon, in the chamber of the former, who had been rather out of health for a few weeks, when

she suddenly looked up from her work, and said, "Agnes, is it not time for us to become Christians?"

Agnes' lip quivered, as she replied, "Yes, I have thought much of it of late, and I mean to do so at the meetings."

Louise secretly made the same resolution, though not without compunction for putting off what ought to be done without delay.

The meetings commenced on Tuesday morning, and about half an hour before the time, Agnes called for Louise, who exhibited a great reluctance to attend, and at length made her health an excuse for remaining at home.

Agnes, however, was in earnest in her desire to go, though she confessed to Louise that she did not feel as deeply as she had done.

When our young friend was left alone, she was by turns sorry and glad that she had not accompanied her companion. She could not understand her own feelings. For weeks she had been inwardly mourning over her sins, and had

been so much distressed at the view she had had of herself as a guilty sinner before God, that she dreaded to hear any more upon the subject.

Again and again she determined to become a Christian when she should be older. But the gracious spirit still contined to knock, saying, "Open unto me." Terrible was the conflict in her soul; but at length she resolved to leave the subject for *that* day, and soon after took a book, and became quite calm.

O, how dangerous was her condition! Thousands, situated as she then was, have been left by the Spirit FOREVER.

For two days she manifested little or no concern for herself, and had often remained alone in the house, while all were in church.

Sarah was deeply affected, and had many serious conversations with her parents, while on their part the most intense anxiety was felt for their daughters.

On Thursday morning, Dr. Merton requested

Louise to accompany him to his study, where he tenderly, but faithfully, talked with her about the concerns of her immortal soul, the danger of delaying repentance, and the great joy it would give her parents to see her choosing God for her everlasting portion.

Louise was so much agitated that she heard but a small part of what her father said. She felt that she had grieved the Spirit again and again, and that if she did not *now* listen to his pleading voice, he would take his everlasting flight, and heaven would be lost to her forever.

Her father asked if he should pray for her, to which she nodded assent, as she dared not trust herself to speak. It now seemed as if he had known all her secret thoughts and feelings, so entirely did he lay open her heart before God; and she shuddered at the view of her sinful neglect of a Saviour's love. Dr. Merton then proposed to her to attend the meeting that morning with her mother; and she retired to her room.

The sermon was from Prov. xiii. 15: "The

way of the transgressor is hard." It was an able one, and Louise, as she wept, acknowledged its truth as far as regarded herself.

At the close of the sermon, the hymn was sung, beginning with these words: —

> "Blest be the tie that binds
> Our hearts in Christian love;"

when all those who could join in the spirit of the hymn were requested to rise and sing.

As Mrs. Merton, who sat by her daughter, arose, Louise instinctively caught hold of her mother, as if she felt that the final separation was about to take place; then, releasing her hold, she sobbed aloud. When the meeting was closed, Louise tried to restrain her tears, and walked in silence by her mother, Sarah being allowed to spend the intermission with a friend, as the place where the meetings were attended was a mile from the house of Dr. Merton.

On reaching home, our young friend went immediately to her room, begging her mother to

excuse her from dinner. And never, till time shall end, will the events of these few hours be forgotten.

She entered her closet, and throwing herself upon her knees, she begged for pardon, if pardon there could be for one so guilty. To her, God appeared as a consuming fire. She had so long refused to obey, had slighted so many offers of mercy, that she felt it was right she should be punished; but, O, to be shut out of heaven, to be separated forever from God, and from those she loved, was more than her soul could endure. Her mother knocked gently at the door, and anxiously asked if she would not like to have her father pray for her, then conducting her to the study, told him of her desire.

Dr. Merton directed them with his hand into the next room, and said, with an agitated voice, that he would be with them directly.

Louise had hardly shut the door before she heard her father weep aloud, and as she stood

fastened to the spot, she could hear his broken petitions for her. "O," thought she, "can there be hope for me?" For the first time a ray of light darted into her soul.

The good man soon joined them, and taking the hand of Louise, he asked if she could give herself up to the Saviour.

"O," said she, "I am so wicked!"

"That is the very reason why you should do so," he tenderly replied. "Christ died for the wicked — not for the righteous. If you had never sinned, he could never have redeemed you; but now he offers to bear all your sins, to receive you just as you are, if you will give yourself to him. You have been feeling that on account of your sins, there was no hope for you. Christ came to save those who were lost; *lost* to holiness and heaven, *forever* LOST without redeeming grace."

The idea of a free salvation, without money and without price, seemed new to her, though she had often heard of it before; and as her

father once more entreated the Saviour to disclose himself to her, as ready and willing to be gracious, the light of God's countenance dawned upon her soul, and where wrath had frowned, now mercy smiled. The Saviour had relieved her of the heavy burden of sin, and O, how lovely did he appear! There, upon her knees, did she consecrate herself to him forever.

"Well pleased, the Father sees and hears
The conscious sinner's moan —
Jesus receives her in his arms,
And claims her for his own.

"Not angels can their joys contain,
But kindle with new fire —
The sinner lost, is found, they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre."

When Louise arose, she threw herself into her father's arms, who embraced her tenderly. Their emotions were too deep for utterance; and when, after he had read a few verses to her, she spoke of the joy and peace which filled her soul, he raised his heart to God in grateful adoration and praise.

It was now time for the afternoon service. Louise could hardly recognize herself as the same being who had walked over that ground a few hours previous, despair rending her soul. Now, as she passed one and another, she could hardly refrain from telling them "what a Saviour she had found." She looked anxiously for Sarah, to whom she wished to impart her heavenly joy.

The sermon in the afternoon was upon the preciousness of Christ to the believer; and O, how fervently did her inmost soul respond to every word the speaker uttered!

As they rode home with their father, Louise had no opportunity to see Sarah alone, until they retired to their room for the night. She then, full of affection for her sister, and of intense interest for the welfare of her soul, put her arms affectionately about Sarah's neck, and kissing her tenderly, told her how happy she felt in the hope that her Saviour had pardoned her sins. "And there is but one thing necessary

to complete my happiness, dear sister," continued she, "and that is, that you too may share with me in these rich blessings." Then seeing the color flush Sarah's cheek as she was about to speak, she interrupted her, and in the warmth of her feelings, said earnestly, "Do try it! *dear* sister — do try it! O, how sweet to be at peace with him!"

"I have, Louise," replied Sarah, in a timid voice, "I have tried it, and I do hope that I love Jesus."

Before Sarah had concluded, Louise again embraced her tenderly, while angels might envy them their joy as they talked of a Saviour's dying love.

CHAPTER XI.

SABBATH SCHOOL CLASS.

Louise's Residence with her Sister. — Her Friend Fanny. — Their Teaching in the Colored Sabbath School. — Respect of Miss Merton's Scholars for her. — Marriage of one of them. — Their Gift to her on her Return Home. — Her Profession of Religion. — Her Sister's sudden Death.

It had long been the intention of Dr. and Mrs. Merton to allow Louise to spend the winter with one of her married sisters, residing in a large town beautifully situated on the banks of the Hudson River. There was an academy in the place, the teachers stood high in public esteem, and they thought it would be a great advantage to her to attend upon their instructions; but as the time approached to leave her dear home, Louise began to feel a sinking of spirits, and earnestly desired her parents to postpone her visit another year.

This request they felt a strong inclination to comply with, but as a letter was received from her sister, urging her to come immediately, and stating that in a late revival in C., more than two thirds of the congregation had given evidence of a change of heart, they concluded it was not advisable to alter their plan.

I will not attempt a description of the parting of Louise from her beloved parents, her dear, *dear* sister, united to her by ties stronger than sisterly affection; of her adieu to her own Agnes, as she lovingly called her; the farewell visit to schoolmates and friends; or her last walk through the grove, where she had so often, of late, retired for communion with her heavenly Father. I will pass on to say that she arrived safely in C., was cordially received by her brother and sister, and there introduced to a large circle of young friends, whose hearts beat in unison with hers in the ardor of their first love to the Saviour. How delightful was their intercourse! They rarely met without spending

a few moments in social prayer and praise. Louise felt a strong desire to be useful to the multitude of poor women and children she saw whenever she walked the streets. She remembered that her divine Master went about doing good, and she longed to follow his example.

In one of her new friends she soon found a kindred spirit. Though belonging to a family of great wealth, Fanny Mills was a humble Christian, and enjoyed nothing more than a visit with Louise to the poor and afflicted. As they walked, arm in arm, talking of the love of Jesus, they were in turn surprised and delighted to find that they were not alone in the exercises of mind they had thought peculiar to themselves. Each communicated their struggles with self, the contest between sin and holiness, and each felt encouraged by the triumphs they had been enabled to achieve over sinful habits and affections.

> "They shared their mutual woes,
> Their mutual burdens bore,
> And often for each other flowed
> The sympathizing tear."

The town of C. contained a numerous colored population. Our young friends, Louise and Fanny, upon ascertaining that there was a small Sabbath school entirely for their benefit, determined to offer themselves as teachers.

The school was superintended by Esquire H., one of the prominent men of the place, whose philanthropy in behalf of the colored race was well known and appreciated.

He thanked them heartily for coming to his aid, as the school had filled up of late, and they were much in need of teachers. Louise was appointed to take charge of the Bible class, which at that time consisted of seven members; but as she took pleasure in calling upon them at their homes, they all, with one exception, being married women, she soon found herself obliged to remove to another part of the small chapel, in order to accommodate her fifteen scholars. Esquire H. smilingly remarked, as he introduced to her one after another, "This woman says she has come 'to join the Bible class what has Miss Merton for a teacher.'"

Many, indeed most, of these, had at some period in their lives made a profession of religion, — some in connection with the Methodists, others with the Free-will Baptist and Presbyterian societies of the place — but they were generally very ignorant in regard to the doctrines and duties of the Bible.

Louise found, however, two of the older members of the class, who had evidently long studied the word of God, and had been taught by the Spirit to understand its sacred truths.

These two, though nearly fifty years of age, were commonly known by the names of Jenny and Polly, but were always addressed by Louise with the respect due their age and Christian character. These scholars often put their young teacher to the blush by their knowledge of the doctrines she was endeavoring to teach.

Every moment that she could command through the week from her other duties, was devoted to the study of the lesson, that she might prepare herself to be more useful to those under her care.

So much interested did she become in the temporal and spiritual welfare of the colored population, that she often preferred a walk among the back streets and lanes where they dwelt, to riding and walking with her companions for pleasure. Even where she was not personally known, the name "Miss Merton" always insured her welcome and respect, and many a poor sufferer was relieved by her soothing voice, as she administered to their necessities.

One Sabbath afternoon, Esquire H., not fully understanding the secret of so powerful an influence which so young a person had acquired over her class, determined to take a seat among them, and witness her mode of instruction.

The class now occupied a corner of the room, so that they all, when she was seated before them, could be within sound of her voice.

On the present occasion, one of the old women alluded to informed her teacher that Nancy, one of the younger members of the class, had been

married the previous evening, and had prevailed upon her husband to accompany her to the school. Louise thought it best to give her some instruction with regard to her conduct as a wife, and after expressing great pleasure at her having invited her husband into the school, turned from the lesson in course to the fifth chapter in Ephesians, teaching the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives. Directing her remarks particularly to the "bride," she endeavored to impress upon her mind that God has appointed the husband to be the head of the family, and that reverence was due to him, as such, while, at the same time, she, as a Christian, would be able to exert a great influence over him.

She had already remarked at some length upon the great importance of striving, by a kind, consistent course of life, to win him to the Saviour, when a smile extending around the class attracted her attention, and turning to see what caused such unusual levity, she, to her

great embarrassment and distress, perceived that Esquire H. had been an attentive listener to all that had been said.

Instantly it flashed upon her, that it must appear to him very ludicrous for her, a young girl, but fifteen years of age, to be instructing married women upon the duties of matrimony; and she turned away to hide the tears which forced themselves into her eyes.

The peculiar smile around the mouth of Esquire H. disappeared in a moment, when he saw that he had unintentionally distressed her, and kindly saying he was sorry he had interrupted her *appropriate* remarks, went to another part of the room.

Winter and spring had passed pleasantly away. June had come, and Louise was soon to return to her native village. Her heart bounded with joy at the thought of once more beholding the faces of the dear ones at home, and in imagination she had again and again transported herself

to that most dearly loved spot, had received the warm kiss of affection — felt her father's kind arms lovingly embracing her, while her mother's smile had lost none of its sweetness.

It was the Sabbath. Louise was to meet her class probably for the last time. The lesson was read, a short explanation given, and then Louise told them she expected to leave town in a few days, and that her friend would take her class.

The young teacher was sad at the thought of leaving those she had so long instructed, but she knew not *how* sad she should feel until she saw the tears and heard the sobs caused by this announcement; and when the school closed she had not been able at all to reconcile them to the idea of her departure.

The day before she left C., two of the class waited upon her as a committee of the whole, begging her acceptance of a handkerchief of the finest texture, as a slight token of their gratitude and affection. Louise received the gift with evident pleasure, and told them when she

returned home she should send a book to each of the class, that they might not forget her, nor the instructions she had given them. This she did, and in reply to the letter accompanying the books, she received one from them after a few months, which, with their little gift, has always been retained among her choicest treasures. Soon after the return of Louise from C., she, with her beloved Sarah, felt an earnest desire to commemorate their Saviour's dying love at his table. Upon informing their parents of their wish, Dr. Merton requested them to write an account of their Christian experience, from the time they first thought themselves savingly interested in the mercy of God, and also their views of the several doctrines expressed in the creed, and the duties embraced in the covenant.

They complied with his request, and their accounts being satisfactory, they were admitted to full communion with the visible church. Soon after this, Sarah, whose health had long been delicate, began to droop like a tender flower

exposed to an autumnal wind, and her sorrowing parents felt that they would soon be called to give their youngest and loveliest child to the Saviour.

As her body grew more feeble, her spirit seemed to expand, and it was observed by all who saw her, that she was fast ripening for her heavenly home. She was often overheard praying, in a low, sweet voice, for her unconverted companions and schoolmates. During the past winter she had begged to be allowed a little class in the Sabbath school, and now her most earnest petitions were for those who had been under her care, that they might meet her in heaven.

It was very affecting to hear her childish petitions at the throne of grace, always addressing her heavenly Friend by the endearing name of Father. She felt that he cared for her as a tender father careth for a beloved child, and she willingly intrusted herself to his kind protection.

So gently did she pass away with the leaves

of autumn, that even her most intimate friends were not aware that death was so near.

Parents, brother, and sister stood by the bedside of the dying girl. She had taken her last farewell of them all, and now her redeemed spirit was waiting to take its everlasting flight to the bosom of her Saviour. Suppressed sobs alone interrupted the solemn stillness. At length the afflicted father, as he bent over her, announced that she was asleep — sweetly asleep in Jesus.

"Glorious! *glorious!*" exclaimed a distinguished clergyman present, who had, in imagination, followed her ascending spirit to the scenes of celestial glory bursting upon her view. Turning to the weeping mother, he said, "Glorious! to give such a child to the Saviour!"

"Yes," replied she, "I thank God that he has given me such a child to be a jewel in the crown of the Redeemer."

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE BENNY.

Louise in Sorrow. — Her Mother's Conversation. — Her Parents' Fears. — Her Father's Expedient. — Her Visit to Little Benny. — The happy Result. — The new Suit of Clothes.

After the excitement arising from the death and burial of Sarah had passed away, Dr. and Mrs. Merton became conscious of its sad effects upon her sister. The change in Louise was indeed great. Instead of the free, buoyant spirits which had always characterized her, she was now silent and sad; her step had lost its elasticity, and was slow and weary; her eyes no longer beamed with hope and mirth, but were grave and serious; and if she was suddenly addressed, they quickly filled with tears.

Mrs. Merton's maternal heart was ready to note the first token of alarm. She was mourn-

ing the early loss of one loved daughter; and the altered appearance of Louise made her fear she would soon be called to give up another. She followed her child to the chamber, and endeavored to rouse her to cheerfulness and hope. For some time Louise only wept in silence; but at length, overcome by her mother's earnest solicitude, she unburdened her oppressed heart, and freely confessed the grief which was consuming her; day and night she mourned unceasingly for the loved Sarah. Every hour she missed the gentle one, who, in health, was scarce ever absent from her side, while the performance of the ever-recurring duties which they had together shared, had become painful beyond endurance.

Louise confessed with bitter tears that she knew her heart was unsubmissive to the divine will. Often, when her pillow had been drenched with weeping, had she struggled with herself to be able to say, "Thy will, not mine, be done." And when she fell asleep believing herself to

have conquered, the light of the next morning brought back a renewal of her grief.

Mrs. Merton took the first opportunity of consulting her husband with regard to their child; and they both agreed that some means must be taken to turn her mind from the sorrow which threatened to destroy her health, until time could allay the poignancy of her grief. Several plans were suggested which it was hoped would tend to this result, and among them a visit to her relatives in the country, where she had always appeared to enjoy herself greatly. But the bare statement of such a proposal produced a more violent passion of sorrow than any they had heretofore witnessed. It was to this place that she had accompanied her sister, and every source of enjoyment, every tree and shrub in her uncle's garden, was so intimately connected with their past pleasures, that she could not revert to them without anguish.

The following day, Dr. Merton entered the room where his wife and daughter were sitting

silently at their work, and in conformity with a plan formed with his wife the evening previous, called out in a cheerful voice, "Come, my daughter, I am going to the east parish. Will you accompany me?"

The pensive smile accompanying the answer, "If you wish it, father," caused the doctor's heart to throb painfully; but, concealing his emotion, he added, "Be quick, then, my dear; I have many calls to make, and must return before noon."

"Clothe yourself warmly, my child," said her mother, as she laid aside her work and arose to leave the apartment.

The night had been cold and frosty, and the clear, bracing air struck a chill through the shivering girl; but it brought no trace of color to her pallid cheek. The father had intended to appeal to her conscience whether she were doing right to cherish her grief in such a degree as to endanger her health; but as he cast his eye upon her shrinking into the corner of the

carriage, he felt that the present was not a fitting opportunity, and he determined to trust to the events of the morning to divert her thoughts from herself.

After a rapid ride of half an hour, the doctor drew up to a brown house, where he requested Louise to alight. As he lifted her from the carriage, he informed her that three families resided in the house, and that he had patients in two of them. Having secured his horse and motioned his daughter to follow him, he passed up the stairs common to the different tenants, and knocked gently at the door of a room on the second floor. They heard a woman's voice bidding a child open the door, and presently walked in. The first object which struck Louise on entering was a cot bed standing near the front window, upon which was a boy, pale, but intellectual in the expression of his features. The child was sitting nearly upright by means of various articles of clothing placed behind his pillows, and, at the first glimpse of his kind

friend, clapped his tiny hands and shouted an exclamation of delight. There was something about the boy which so much interested the young girl that not until the woman had spoken several times to offer her a seat did she realize that another person was present.

"This is my daughter," said the doctor, taking the child's small hand and tenderly placing it in that of Louise. "I want you to become acquainted with her. She is very fond of little folks."

"She's sick too," suggested the boy, earnestly scanning the young lady's features.

"O, no," replied Louise, "I'm not sick. I am only cold."

"Perhaps you had better stay here while I make my other calls," suggested the doctor, quickly taking advantage of the interest he saw his young patient had excited. "It will be but little farther for me to come round this way on my return."

Louise readily assented, and before her father

left the house, had taken off her outer garments and set herself to work cultivating the acquaintance of the boy. In the hour which followed, she played cat's cradle with him, drew houses, horses, and dogs upon his slate, and at length wholly won the heart of the little fellow by explaining the cuts in his picture book, and relating the Bible stories connected with them. When her father returned to take her home, he was delighted with the result of his expedient. Her eye sparkled with something of its former animation as Benny exclaimed, "O, I like to have her here! I wish you would bring her every day."

As Dr. Merton found it necessary to make a daily visit to a woman who occupied the same house, Louise found opportunity to repeat her visit to little Benny, and at length was as warmly welcomed by him as her father had been. In consequence of the rickets, the child had been a cripple from the cradle; but while his body had remained inactive, his mind had expanded until his intellectual attainments far exceeded those of

most children of the same age. Though only in his sixth year, he could both read and understand the simple stories which kind friends had presented him. Indeed, his remarks often proved him to have thought upon what he had read. His greatest delight, however, was in listening to Bible stories; and Louise, who had a particular tact in telling them, found interest and inspiration from his open-mouthed wonder. One day, while waiting for her father, she discovered that her patient little friend was scantily furnished with clothes for the coming season. His usual dress was a calico robe, and the one he now wore was torn and ragged. With her mother's delighted assent, the young girl made a new one of rich, dark calico, trimming the collar and cuffs with stripes of red bordering: then, begging some pieces of flannel for under shirts, she soon had a complete suit for her sick favorite.

When she exhibited her present to Benny, his delight far more than compensated for the trouble she had taken. He insisted upon wearing

it directly, and cast aside his old one with many expressions of contempt. Every part fitted exactly — even the tiny cuffs, which Louise had feared were too small. She left him after an hour still admiring himself in his new garment, little thinking how many months would pass before she should see him again.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOING WEST.

Sickness of Louise. — Visit of Mr. Bond. — Her Interest in his Conversation. — His Invitation. — Her Parents' Consent. — The Journey. — Mr. Bond's Interview with a Profane Youth.

JUST as Dr. and Mrs. Merton were beginning to be confirmed in the hope of Louise's ultimate recovery, she was attacked with a severe cold and cough, which confined her to the house for many weeks.

One day, at the dinner table, her father mentioned that he had received a letter from an old friend, informing him of an intention to visit their village, and to pass the night with them. Toward the close of the afternoon, Louise, from her chamber, heard her father's welcome, and urged her mother to allow her to remain above stairs, as she much dreaded the sight of strangers.

Mrs. Merton gently replied, "No, my daughter. He will inquire for you, and would be pained by your avoiding him."

It was with unusual reluctance, however, that the young girl obeyed the summons to tea; but one glance into the mild, pleasant eyes of Mr. Bond expelled every unpleasant feeling, and drew out her heart toward him.

The gentleman quickly arose, and advancing toward her, took both her hands in his, cordially expressing his pleasure at seeing her. Then leading her to a seat at the table, he placed her in it with the kindness of a father, and all the playfulness of an old friend.

Mr. Bond was a missionary from the far west. While in college he had distinguished himself by his attainments, and many prophesied for him a brilliant future. But to the astonishment of those who prized worldly honors above the reward Christ has offered such as labor in his vineyard, he entered upon the study of

theology, with the expressed determination of becoming a missionary.

At the expiration of his theological course, he received a pressing invitation to become pastor of a large church in a New England city; but not one moment did he turn aside from the field to which he had devoted himself. Only pausing for one farewell visit to his aged parents, he sped on his way to his distant home, promising, if Providence favored him, to return in one year for the lady who had consented to be his wife. At the time of his visit to Dr. Merton, he had been married eighteen years, had become the father of seven children, three of whom had died in infancy. When some of his friends wondered at his continuing in so limited a sphere, he smiled as he answered that his duties were as numerous as those of a prime minister, and his influence too great for the cultivation of the grace of humility. And it was truly the case, that while he had occupied the same pulpit ever since his first visit to the

western country, he had helped to gather and build up many churches, where the facilities, by communications with great thoroughfares, had speedily converted the small village, with only a score or two of inhabitants, into a populous town. In every doubtful or difficult case, the subject was referred to Parson Bond, whose decision was considered final.

There was a vein of mirth in the gentleman's character which, added to his cordial, western manner, and the real kindness of his heart, gave him great power over all with whom he was associated. During the evening following the introduction of Louise to him, her parents were delighted to witness the interest with which she listened to his account of the great work to be accomplished in the west. Mr. Bond drew a vivid picture of the wants of the settlers, many of whom had emigrated from New England towns, but who were now without any means of educating their children or of attending divine worship.

"I should think," suggested Louise, with something of her former zeal, "that the children could be gathered into a Sabbath school."

"True enough," responded Mr. Bond, with a warm smile; "that is just what we wish — the first step toward the formation of a church; but where are the teachers?"

"Perhaps your daughter would engage in such a work."

"Perhaps she would," replied the gentleman, with a hearty laugh, as he took Louise's hand and gave it a condescending pat, as if he pitied her ignorance. "Well, Emily has — let me see — one, two, three, four schools on her hands at present. The Sabbath is no day of rest for poor Emily."

"Well, then, if my parents will consent, I will go and help her," exclaimed Louise, with a burst of feeling.

"I could assure you of a hearty welcome," replied the gentleman, giving her hand a cordial squeeze.

The subject was then diverted to another source, as Mr. Bond perceived that the proposition of Louise was a startling one, and that her parents were not prepared at once to decide upon it.

The next morning the young girl added her entreaties to those of her parents, that Mr. Bond would prolong his visit. This his engagements prevented; but he promised to return to them for a day or two before he left for his western home. He then drew Dr. Merton aside, and urged him to allow Louise to accompany him, and pass the winter in his family. He found the father more favorable to the proposal than he had dared to hope; but the doctor said he feared Mrs. Merton would not consent, as their daughter was in delicate health.

It is unnecessary to detail all the struggles in the mother's heart, before she could give her cordial approval to the plan. It is sufficient to say that when Mr. Bond returned to the village, Louise was ready to accompany him to L. Dur-

ing all the preparations for her journey, she displayed so much interest, and even zeal, that her mother was convinced the change would be highly beneficial to her health. The last day at home was the most painful one. Agnes, who, through all her trials, had been an invaluable comforter and friend, passed it with her. Together they visited the grave of Sarah, which Louise watered with tears; together they bade adieu to many dear friends; and the young girl received many warm wishes for the entire restoration of her health and spirits. Nor was little Benny forgotten. Agnes received him as a precious charge from her friend, and promised to visit him as often as possible.

It was considered quite an event, in their little community, for one of their number to travel so far as the western country; and though Louise was to start early, all her young friends were present to give her a parting kiss. Phebe Shepard loudly exclaimed, that she wished she were going, too; while Ellen Fuller and Lucy

Lovell hoped she would not be gone long. Her old friend Nancy silently put into her hand a brown paper parcel, making a significant motion with her mouth, that it was to satisfy her hunger when she was in the region of bears and wolves. The faithful domestic had a great prejudice against the western country, as abounding "with those varmin," as she called them.

When the stage coach drove to the door, Mr. Bond made his appearance from the study, followed by the good father and mother. Mrs. Merton's eyes were filled with tears; but she pressed Louise to her heart, whispering, "Do all the good you can, my daughter, and that shall be my recompense for your loss this winter."

"Let us hear from you soon," called out Dr. Merton as the stage drove away. Louise waved her handkerchief in reply. She was now fairly started on her journey to the west, where she hoped to accomplish much in her Saviour's cause.

The following week a letter was received from her, dated New York. It was as follows: —

"Dear Father and Mother:

"We reached this great city last evening. Mr. Bond says he shall be detained here two days. I came directly to aunt Emily's, where I met a most cordial reception. Fortunately for me, cousin Charles is at home from college, and says he shall be most happy to show me the lions. I am to accompany him this afternoon to see West's picture of 'Christ Rejected.'

"I find Mr. Bond a very kind and interesting travelling companion. Every hour I realize more truly how unreservedly he has devoted himself to the service of his divine Master. While on board the steamboat I had an opportunity to witness an instance of his desire to do good. He had given me his arm on deck, and we were standing near the railing, watching a boat which was passing us. Two young gentlemen stood near. They were dressed

very handsomely, and were talking earnestly together, when one of them made a remark at which the other took offence, and used dreadfully profane language. I saw Mr. Bond turn suddenly, and cast a quick glance at the young man, and I feared he was going to address him in words of reproof. I knew this was deserved; but my heart beat painfully, lest there should be some sharp words in return. I think my countenance must have shown my alarm, for Mr. Bond abruptly led me away to another part of the boat. Here I soon gained the friendship of a young boy, whose broad, noble head reminded me of our own little Benny's; and after a few moments my kind friend asked me to excuse him for a short time. What was my astonishment to see him approach the profane youth, who was standing near us, and after a few words, take his arm, and pace the deck by his side. I gazed at them with great interest, every moment expecting to see some manifesta-

tion of anger from the young man; but I was soon relieved, for the next time they came near me, I saw Mr. Bond point toward a town we could just discern in the distance, and heard him commence some anecdote, when they turned back, and his voice was lost to me.

"Just then my little friend asked me to accompany him to the other end of the boat, and as his mother consented, we walked across the deck, and at length seated ourselves in a retired place to watch the foam from the wheel. It was not long before I heard a low murmur of voices near us, and upon listening closely I distinguished that of Mr. Bond. In the most tender, fatherly manner, he was entreating the youth to break off his dreadful habit of profanity, saying, 'It makes my heart ache to see one of so interesting an appearance, one who might be such an ornament to society, degrade himself in such a manner.' Finding his companion made no remark, he went on to say how

awful it was to break the law of God, repeating a part of the third command, 'For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.'

"All this time I held little Arthur's hand tightly, so that he might not move. Indeed, I suppressed my own breath, I was so afraid we should be discovered, and we could not get away without passing very near them. Mr. Bond went on in such an earnest, loving tone, that I was sure no offence could be taken, though I could no longer understand the words; and presently they arose and walked away together. Just as we were leaving the boat, there was a sudden confusion at my side, and turning around I saw the same young man grasp Mr. Bond's hand, and shake it as if he would never let him go. With streaming eyes, he exclaimed, 'Good by, sir! good by! You have proved yourself the best friend I ever had.'

"'Come and see me at L.,' answered Mr. Bond, trying to conceal his emotion.

"'I would go a hundred miles to see you once more,' called out the youth; and that was the last we saw of him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LOST MONEY.

Letter of Louise to her Parents. — Description of her new Friends. — James Gannet. — His Loss. — Expedient of Mr. Bond. — James's Gratitude. — The Sabbath Schools. — Zeal of Louise in the good Work.

Various reasons occurred to detain Mr. Bond upon his western journey, so that he did not reach home until the end of the fifth week. I shall quote from the letter of Louise an account of her reception in L., and also some events which interested her in her journey.

"Dearly beloved Parents:

"We have at length reached the great valley, and I begin to realize how far I am from home. You can easily imagine my delight when dear, good Mrs. Bond placed in my hands a letter from you. Coming as it did at the first moment

of our meeting, and commending me to her care with so much tenderness, it took away all the desolation and loneliness I expected to feel among strangers. But in the family of Mr. Bond I never could have experienced these. You know what a charm there is about him, and how my heart, though sore with grief, was drawn toward him in the first moment of our meeting. Mrs. Bond is worthy to be the wife of such a man. This I intend as the highest compliment that could be paid her. She is eminently a Christian lady; courteous, but enthusiastically warm in her manners, and fervent in her piety. Emily, who is about my own age, is cordial and energetic, very quick in her motions, with her eyes wide open to every thing passing about her. She has her father's sweet mouth and pleasant smile, but otherwise her countenance is not particularly attractive.

"Then comes Joseph, his mother's boy in looks and ways; a noble youth as far as I can judge from an acquaintance of twenty-four hours. Ed-

ward, the next in order, is absent from home, but is to be sent for to-day, as his father is impatient to see him. Then comes little Bella, the fairy of the household. I think her the most beautiful child I have seen. Very slight and symmetrical in figure, she is constantly in motion, dancing here and there, always about one, but never in the way; while out of her sweet, laughing mouth come such sage inquiries and grave reflections as make persons smile in spite of themselves. This morning I heard her asking her father how many Louise Mertons he found while he was away, and why he didn't bring some more of them to L. for her to play with. Mr. Bond cast a most quizzical glance at me as he replied, 'One Louise is as much as I can manage.' The child looked grave for one instant, and then exclaimed, with a merry laugh, 'O papa, you are bringing a joke on me.'

"But I must relate a curious event which occurred in the canal boat. A few hours after we went on board, I noticed a young man sitting

alone, weeping bitterly. I pointed him out to Mr. Bond, who led me to a secure place, and went directly to him. About half an hour afterwards I saw them going together to the captain's office, my kind friend saying as he passed, that he hoped I should be able to interest myself in looking about, as he had business enough for the afternoon. When he came to lead me to the supper table, he told me that the youth, whose name was James Gannet, had been robbed of three hundred dollars the previous night. He had been living at the west, had just returned to Vermont, where his parents lived, and obtained their promise to emigrate with him as soon as he had purchased some land and built a log house. His uncle was so much pleased with his care of his aged parents, that he had presented him with two hundred dollars in new bills on the Bank of America. Beside this, he had one hundred in small bills, together with some silver in a purse, to pay the expenses of his journey. The night before he took the boat,

he slept in the room with three men, one of whom occupied the same bed with him. When he undressed, he placed the leather pocket book containing his money under his pillow, unperceived, as he thought, by any one. He was very tired, and slept so sound that when he awoke his companions had all left the room. Supposing he might be too late for the boat, he dressed in haste, snatched his wallet from its hiding place, ate his breakfast, and hurried to the landing. There were so many coming and going, that he had no opportunity to see if his money was safe, until he was fairly on board, when, to his horror, he found every bill was gone. He at once suspected his bedfellow, and was on his way to the captain to beg to be set ashore, when he met the identical man, and told him at once of his loss. The man sympathized with him, but said it was no use to go back to the tavern; nothing could be done there. The best way was to advertise, and offer a suitable reward to the finder.

"It was just at this time that I first saw him, when he began to realize that his money was gone beyond recovery — that his uncle would blame him for his carelessness, and his parents be compelled to wait a year longer before they could join him. Mr. Bond made James point out the suspected man, and afterwards talked with him as if he were asking advice for the poor youth. Mr. Morey, as he called himself, said he pitied the young fellow, if he had really met with a loss, but that there had been cases within his own knowledge where a similar story was greatly exaggerated, or wholly manufactured for the occasion. 'At any rate,' he added, 'after standing, as James stated that he had for half an hour waiting for the boat, in the midst of a crowd, he couldn't reasonably expect to recover his property.'

"Mr. Bond, fully convinced that Mr. Morey was the thief, taxed his ingenuity to invent some method of getting the money from him. It must be done at once, or the man

might go ashore. The story soon spread among the passengers, and one benevolent gentleman suggested making up a purse for the unfortunate youth. Mr. Morey seconded this in a loud tone, and opened his well-filled pocket book, as much as to say he was ready to do his part; but James, with a blushing cheek, thanked the gentleman, saying he had rather have one dollar of his own earnings than a hundred given him in charity.

"But I must hasten to the end of my story. Mr. Bond threw himself upon a bench near the place where the passengers landed, and, through the night, no one individual left the boat without his knowledge. The next morning the first person I saw was James, who seemed to consider Mr. Bond in the light of a father. After some conversation with the captain, a plan was formed for a number of gentlemen to gather around Mr. Morey without exciting his suspicions, and then Mr. Bond would propose that, as the youth suspected the thief was on board, they

should each give their pocket books to the captain for examination. As so many of the bills were new and upon one bank, they hoped to identify them. A good opportunity soon occurred; the proposal was made, and Mr. Morey was the first to fall in with it. 'Yes,' said he, 'I approve of that, and I'm ready, for one. I hope we shall find the cowardly robber.'

"This course rather turned the feeling in his favor, and the examination would have ceased had it not been for Mr. Bond, who kept his keen, searching eye fixed upon him, to the wicked man's evident annoyance. He then gave up his own poorly filled wallet, which the captain just glanced into, and respectfully returned.

"Mr. Morey then endeavored to turn the whole thing into a joke. He grew very much excited — talked loud and somewhat profane. Fortunately, as it proved, the noise drew together nearly all the gentlemen on board; and when the captain was just advising Mr. Bond to

abandon all further search, one man called out a request to be enlightened as to the cause of the sport. 'Captain Harris,' said Mr. Bond, 'will comply with the request;' and no sooner did he name the new bills upon the Bank of America, than a gentleman sprang forward and caught Mr. Morey by the arm, shouting, 'Here is the thief! I have the bills safe in my pocket book.'

"The wicked fellow broke away, and tried to throw himself into the water to swim ashore, but he was soon safely secured, and the money restored. The gentleman afterwards explained that, the day before, he happened to be counting some bills he had just taken in trade, when this fellow came along, and asked if he would have the goodness to exchange some New York bills for western money. This was done, and thus the stolen property came into his possession. The captain promised to deliver the thief to the proper authorities.

"The face of James fairly shone with joy as

he received from Mr. Bond his restored money. 'How can I repay your goodness, sir?' he asked, as he followed us to a retired seat. 'I never should have recovered my money but for you, and it is right you should share it with me.'

"'My dear young friend,' answered Mr. Bond, putting his hand upon James's shoulder, 'I have no doubt you are grateful for the trifling favor I have done you, and there is a way you can repay me without any loss to yourself.'

"His manner was grave and tender, and I listened attentively to what followed, while James's eager face proved he was ready to do whatever his benefactor required.

"'It is this,' continued Mr. Bond. '*Love the Saviour with all your heart, and serve him with all your might.*'

"James burst into tears, and then followed a free conversation, in which he said he had begun to love Christ, and it was his only drawback in leaving his native village, that he should be de-

prived of his Sabbath privileges, and feared he should grow cold in his zeal for his divine Master.

"You see, my dear parents, I have filled almost two sheets with the account of James, and have only a few lines in which to tell you that I am much better in health than when I left home, and that I long to begin the work for which I came to the west. To-morrow is the Sabbath, and I have promised to accompany Emily to two of her schools. Even Edward has a class, and the whole family, not excepting darling little Bella, appear to feel that there is a great work to do here, and each one is ready to do his part. If God gives me strength, I shall rejoice to aid them.

Your loving daughter,

LOUISE."

In a letter from Mr. Bond to Dr. Merton, a few weeks later, he expressed himself as highly gratified with her conduct during their recent

journey. "She was always pleased," he wrote, "when I devoted myself to her, and always satisfied when I was otherwise employed. She was interested in the scenery, and interested in her companions; ready to receive a favor, and far more ready to grant one. This is, I think, characteristic of her — a desire to oblige those about her; and many mothers, weary with their numerous cares during a long and fatiguing journey, will agree with me, that she was indefatigable in her efforts to interest and amuse her young travelling companions."

To say that Louise regarded her new friend, Emily, with admiration, and longed to imitate her example, would but feebly express the feelings with which she retired to rest on the first Sabbath after her arrival. She mourned that she had heretofore done so little for Him who had bought her with a price "all price beyond;" she devoted herself renewedly to his service, and prayed for wisdom and strength to do his will.

In the morning Mr. Bond had cautioned her against undertaking too much, and his wife restricted her visits to the schools nearest their residence. But when Emily returned at night, in company with her brother, from a ride of ten miles, and gave a glowing picture of the increasing interest and desire for instruction manifested by her young pupils, she protested against being held back from joining the great work, and during the succeeding months, proved, by her untiring zeal, that her heart was in it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW MINISTER.

Good News. — Visit of James Gannet. — Arrival of Mr. Olmstead. — Bella's Mission. — James's Purchase of a Farm. — New Arrangement of the Sabbath Schools. — Letters from New England. — Sickness and Death of little Benny.

"WELL, my daughters," exclaimed Mr. Bond, one day as he entered the sitting room where his wife and children were busy at their sewing, "I have good news for you. See which of you will prove the best Yankee, and can guess it first."

"I *guess* you have a letter for me," cried Louise, earnestly.

"And I *guess* the river is frozen so that we can have a fine ride," shouted Emily.

A mysterious shake of the head proved that neither was right. Mr. Bond nodded to his wife to try her skill. She gazed steadily at her

husband for a moment, and then, satisfied that the intelligence was of some importance, said, "Perhaps Dr. Morrison has returned."

"Aha!" cried the gentleman, laughing; "old heads are always wiser than young ones. You are nearer right than these merry girls, and yet you are all wrong. Dr. Morrison has not returned, and what is worse, is not likely to do so for a year; but he has sent a young man to occupy his pulpit, and ——"

"O, who is he? Shall we like him?" eagerly interrupted Emily.

"His name is Olmstead. Time will prove," replied the father, laconically.

"Now don't tease us, papa. Please tell us all you know. It will be so delightful to have service at Morristown again; only I hope that he is the right sort of a man."

"And that he is fond of children, and will sustain that large Bible class, so that you can be spared," added Louise, her face all in a glow of animation.

Mr. Bond smilingly consented to tell all he knew upon the subject. "First," said he, "I have seen the young man, and am favorably impressed with his appearance."

"We can't judge much by that," whispered Emily to Louise. "He judges favorably of every one."

"A high compliment," said the gentleman, bowing gayly to his daughter. "Does not the good book require us to 'think no evil'?"

"I did not mean you to hear," answered the girl, with a slight blush.

"Well, to return to Mr. Olmstead. Here is a letter I have received from Dr. Morrison, recommending him highly; so my favorable impression is confirmed. But you will soon be able to judge for yourselves, for I have invited him to supper."

"I'm glad of that, papa. I can always tell in ten minutes whether or not I shall like a person; and it's so pleasant to have one's mind settled on that point."

"Papa," asked Bella, "why can't I teach a school? I know my letters very well. That little mite of a boy under the hill could be in my class."

This speech caused a merry laugh, which quite disconcerted the young miss, and she added, in a most pathetic voice, "Every body thinks I can't do any good, I'm so small."

"My precious little Bella, you do papa a world of good," exclaimed Mr. Bond, taking her upon his knee, and pressing her to his heart.

"You, papa? Do you good?" inquired the child, with astonishment. "You can read better than any body out west."

"You keep my heart warm, my dear one; and when I am weary and discouraged, I try to think of my cheerful, bright Bella, and so I feel better."

"Dear papa!" she whispered, putting her small hand lovingly on his cheek, "I love you so dearly, I'm glad I do you good."

In the afternoon, just at the hour the stranger

was expected, a knock was heard at the door. Edward ran to open it, while Emily whispered her young friend, "Now, we can tell whether he will do for the west."

"If your father is not in, I will call again," said a voice in the hall.

Louise listened intently. She was sure she had heard the voice before. "It would be pleasant, indeed, if the candidate should prove an old friend."

"O, no, sir," replied Edward. "He will be back in a few minutes. Mother is in here."

The young man entered. Mrs. Bond rose to welcome him, when, to the astonishment of all, Louise sprang forward, and eagerly offered her hand, exclaiming, "Why, James, I thought you far away by this time; but I am very glad to see you."

She then introduced him to Mrs. Bond and Emily as the Mr. Gannet of whom they had heard her speak.

They were hardly seated before Mr. Bond

entered with Mr. Olmstead, whom he had overtaken on the road. Louise had no opportunity to "settle her mind," as Emily expressed it, for James appeared embarrassed, and kept his seat near her, as one he had seen before. He informed her that, on returning to the place which he expected to purchase, he found that a gentleman was already in possession, having taken advantage of his absence to conclude a hasty bargain with the owner. After looking about for some weeks in search of another, which would come within his means, he at length thought of applying to Mr. Bond, hoping to be able to locate in his vicinity.

Louise manifested her interest by listening attentively to the story of his disappointment, and said she knew Mr. Bond would aid him if it were in his power.

Hearing his name mentioned, the gentleman came forward, assured James of a hearty welcome as long as he wished to remain at L., and had no doubt they could find him a farm some-

where in the region. All then adjourned to the tea table, and the conversation became general.

Mr. Olmstead sat directly opposite Louise, so that she could hardly help observing that he had a well-developed head, and though young, was somewhat inclined to baldness — that his eyes were keen and searching — his nose of a generous size — his mouth expressive of great firmness. Before the close of the evening she came to the conclusion that he had a vigorous, inquiring mind; that he gave his opinions frankly and independently of what others thought, and at the same time was good tempered, and open to conviction; and that, like Emily, he was busy settling his mind with regard to his new friends.

"I never was so puzzled," exclaimed Emily impetuously, the moment their visitor had departed. "I can't tell, for the life of me, whether I like him or not."

Mr. Bond smiled, as he asked Louise whether

she found the same difficulty in solving the character of the young stranger.

"I think it hardly fair, sir," was the reply, "to judge one so quickly. One thing I did like, and that was, his candor in admitting himself to be in the wrong, and you right, upon the subject discussed."

Early the next day, Mr. Bond introduced James to a gentleman who was agent for the sale of land in their vicinity, and before the close of the week the young farmer concluded a purchase, paying down a part of the price, and giving a mortgage on the place for the remainder. He then let himself to a gentleman in the neighborhood for profitable wages, until such time as he could commence the building of his cabin.

Although Mr. Olmstead had engaged a boarding place only three miles distant, yet the family at the parsonage saw nothing more of him until the Sabbath following. Emily, Louise, Joseph, and Edward were teaching in their most flourish-

ing Sabbath school, when he walked in, and annoyed Louise greatly by taking a seat near her, to listen to her mode of instruction. He presently, however, perceived her embarrassment, and withdrew to another part of the room. After some practical remarks at the close of the school, he expressed his pleasure to Emily at the meeting, and his delight at finding her so ready for every good work.

"I promised Dr. Morrison to come here regularly during his absence," answered the young girl; "but now I shall give up my charge to you."

"You think far too highly of my capabilities if you suppose I can fill the places of four teachers," rejoined the gentleman, gravely.

"O, you must preach upon the subject, and interest the people of your own congregation."

Mr. Olmstead bowed, as he replied, "We will discuss the matter more fully at your father's house. if you will give me permission."

"If you please, sir. We have two more

schools this afternoon, and I fear we shall be behind our time. Will you come with us? We have a class of adults for you."

"With all my heart, if you'll promise not to leave those also in my charge?"

Louise smiled, as she met an arch glance from the young clergyman, and asked, "Do you fear responsibility?"

The distance to the log cabin, where the next school was convened, was rather more than a mile; but the road was very rough, and as Mr. Olmstead occupied the front seat with Joseph and Edward, there could be no conversation. This was a new enterprise, and the order not fully established. Emily was right glad to have some one who could open the school with prayer, and of sufficient age to command respect, as some of the boys were very unruly and troublesome. She detained him a moment at the door to tell him this, and to request him to divide the classes as he thought proper.

There was an unusual number present. The

gentleman soon convinced the young teachers that he was equal to the occasion, and that his whole soul was engaged in his work. After some slight alterations in the arrangement, the regular lessons were recited and explained, and then Mr. Olmstead made a solemn and impressive address to them, when there was scarcely a dry eye in the room. He declined, however, Emily's urgent invitation to accompany them still farther, as he had appointed a meeting in the church where he was supplying.

No one capable of working was allowed long to remain idle in Mr. Bond's society, and James was soon urged to take a class in one or more schools. He hesitated, lest he were not qualified; but as his pastor found he had received a good English education, and his heart was warm with love to Christ, he would not excuse him.

Several weeks had now passed since the arrival of Mr. Olmstead, and by the assistance of Mr. Bond a more regular system of instruction

than had heretofore been practicable, had been established. The young clergyman had found recruits enough in his congregation to teach in the schools within the bounds of his own parish. This afforded a great relief to the young teachers, who were thus enabled to devote more time to those still in their care. In addition to the hour set apart for teaching, Mr. Bond agreed with his young friend, that half an hour passed in exhortation, singing, and prayer, might be the means of great good, and he readily consented to take his turn in the service.

During all this time, Louise heard frequently from her friends in New England. The last letter from her mother informed her that a daughter of her oldest brother had gratefully accepted a home in their family, and proved a very agreeable companion. Agnes had gone to the city to attend school, while Mr. Shepard had hired a young lady to teach Phebe, Ellen, and Lucy. A room was fitted up in Mr. Shepard's house, and the young girls seemed to improve rapidly

under their new teacher. In a former letter, her father said that her little favorite, Benny, was failing rapidly in strength; but his mind grew more and more mature, and his childish piety was apparent in all his actions. "He often speaks of you," added her father, "and begs me to write you to come home."

In reply, Louise printed a short letter to her young friend, in which she gave him an account of a boy in one of her Sabbath classes, who had no mother or friend to tell him about God; that, until within a few weeks, he had never heard the name of Christ. She asked Benny if it was not her duty to stay and teach him to read the Bible, that he might learn the way to heaven. She concluded her letter by begging him to pray for the poor ignorant children at the west, and to pray for her, that she might do all in her power to enlighten them.

This letter she enclosed in one to her father, and it proved a great comfort to the sick child. He read it many times every day, and scarce

ever, as his mother told the doctor, without an audible prayer for the poor children who didn't know about Jesus Christ. Much as he longed to see Louise, he could never after be persuaded to say he wished she would come home; but when, toward the spring, he became conscious that he was soon to die, he sent her many messages of love, adding that he hoped to meet her, and all the poor children at the west, in the heavenly home to which God was taking him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE QUILTING PARTY.

Coasting. — Studies. — Letter from Louise to her Parents. — The intended Wedding. — Preparations for it. — The merry Party. — The bountiful Repast. — Plays and Games.

It was now midwinter. Mr. Bond and his good wife had not forgotten the duties of hospitality they owed their young guest. Many a fine ride had she enjoyed on the smoothly frozen ground, and many a merry coast with the young people, when their lessons for the day were completed. Joseph and Edward passed the entire morning in their father's study, while little Bella was under her mother's tuition. Of late, indeed, Louise had begged the privilege of hearing the dear child read and spell, and was even giving her lessons in writing upon her tiny porcelain slate, while, in return, Mrs. Bond taught

her guest some of the culinary arts, and imparted lessons in practical economy.

Emily was perfectly untiring in her energy, but she preferred accompanying her father in his parochial visits, or riding horseback to the neighboring town for the family stores. About this time Louise accepted an invitation to a large quilting party, an account of which she gave her parents in her next letter.

"BELOVED PARENTS:

"I have just returned from a long walk, in company with Mr. Bond and Emily. You would be quite encouraged concerning my health could you see my rosy cheeks. My friends say I am growing quite western in my looks and manners. However that may be, I can say that I am very happy, though I love my dear home and home friends as well as ever.

"On our return we met James Gannet, and went with him to select a site for his new house. He is a fine young man, and a great

favorite with all of us, though Bella claims him especially as her own Jamie.

"But I have devoted this letter to giving you an account of a quilting party to which I was lately invited. One of the singers in our choir (you see I say *our*) is soon to be married; and in accordance with the custom here, her young friends have given her two handsome patch-work spreads, which they met together to quilt in readiness for the wedding. Of course, Emily and I had done our part, and were among the first to be present. The frames were spread out in the large, sunny kitchen, and were to be completed before the supper could be served. It was but little past noon when a merry party of twelve girls sat down to their work, determined to see which could accomplish the greatest number of rows. Four more soon joined us, being quite as many as could work conveniently at a time. I still hear the hum of their voices, and the pleasant laugh echoed from one and another, while the needles never ceased their employment,

but worked swiftly up and down, in and out, along the chalked line. In accordance with my taste, one of them was marked in the shell pattern, and was abundantly admired.

"Toward night, the gentlemen began to drop in, one by one, and were kept from mischief by threading the needles, or holding lamps near the work. At six o'clock, the young girls, with a shout, announced the business completed; and then what a buzz of voices, as the stitches were cut, the quilts shaken out, and the frames carried to the chamber in the loft! About half the misses then adjourned to the parlor to entertain themselves and the young men, while the other half proceeded to sweep from the painted floor the refuse cotton and shreds, and to lay the long tables for supper. This proved truly a most bountiful meal, consisting of roast turkey, chicken pie, and bacon, followed by an innumerable variety of cakes, tarts, and pies. The consuming of all this food occupied some time, as you can readily suppose; then came the clearing

off, which was much more quickly accomplished; the young ladies washing the plates and cups, while the gentlemen brought them from the table and carried them to the cupboard, amid merry shouts at the awkwardness of some, and the constant running together of all. After order was restored, the remainder of the evening was passed in playing different games, some of which were very amusing.

"Just in the midst of a play, when a young miss had been entrapped into the repetition of a word she was anxious to avoid, and the mirth in consequence was somewhat boisterous, a sleigh was heard to drive to the door, and, to my astonishment, Mr. Bond and Mr. Olmstead walked in. The surprise I felt did not affect the others, for they were accustomed to see their minister in such scenes, and welcomed him with great cordiality. One and another of the girls clung around him, and begged him to propose some amusement in which he would unite. Mr. Olmstead, being, like myself, somewhat more of a

stranger, took a seat by me, when I began to comment upon the character of my good host, the influence he possessed over almost every class of persons, and the use he made of it for good. 'Now, here,' said I, 'are quite a company of young people expecting to have a merry time; yet see how they welcome him.' Just then I heard a girl shouting, 'O, do, Mr. Bond; you always know such nice games.'

"We were soon seated in a circle. Our good pastor pleasantly responded to the call, and said he had thought of a word which he should conceal until, by his description, it were guessed by some one. The word had several significations. If any persons thought they had discovered it, they were called upon to add minuteness to his description.

"Looking around the room, he said, 'I see an article here; indeed there are several of them. They are very important to our comfort. I hardly know how we could get along without them.'

"'I think I have guessed it,' I exclaimed, after a short pause, laughing at the absorbed manner in which many of the girls were following the gaze of Mr. Bond at the ceiling and walls of the apartment. 'Let us hear what you think of it, then,' was his reply.

"'I think it very much to be dreaded.'

"'Good! capital!' shouted Mr. Olmstead, who was also in the secret. 'I hope, Miss Merton, you will never be more under its power than at the present moment.'

"'Sometimes,' added the good pastor, 'it brings light, and at others gloom and sorrow; and it is always a comfort and a blessing.'

"'What can it be? I can never guess,' was repeated and echoed until Mr. Bond asked, 'What is pleasanter than a clear pane of glass through which we behold the sun; and what is more to be dreaded than *pain*?' spelling the word."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATAL COAST.

The dreadful Accident. — Anguish of the Parents. — Sympathy of Friends. — Remorse of poor Edward. — The Funeral.

Louise had scarcely sent her letter ere she was called to write one of a far different character. The very week succeeding her visit described above, found the inmates of L. parsonage overwhelmed with sorrow. She relates the painful scenes in which she was called to participate in the following letter: —

"O, my dear mother! Your kind heart would bleed with sympathy, could you enter this dwelling, so lately the abode of joy and hope. I can hardly guide my pen as I write the sorrowful tidings. Yesterday morning there was a fine bracing air, and Mr. Bond bade us improve

it to take a fine coast down the hill. We started off directly after breakfast, so as to have the company of the boys, before their study hours. Darling little Bella was the merriest of the whole troop, and sang gayly as she rode along upon Joseph's sled.

"After staying out half an hour, my feet, which were not sufficiently guarded, became very cold, and Emily returned with me to the house. Joseph overtook us, so that Edward alone was left with Bella. I thought Joseph ought to go back; but he and Emily both laughed at the idea of any danger to the little one; so I went on, though with such great reluctance that Joseph added, 'Edward has only fifteen minutes longer to stay, any how; and I dare say before that, Bella will want to come home.'

"I went directly to Mrs. Bond, before I took off my hood, and told her that, Eddy and Bella had staid behind; adding that, if she did not think he would take good care of her, I would return at once to the hill. Emily laughed as

she exclaimed, 'I wouldn't be always worrying, as Louise is, for the world. Bell is old enough to learn to take care of herself.' Mrs. Bond looked at the clock, and replied that she was quite sure Edward would not stay out beyond his time, as his father was very particular about their hours. She gave me a kiss for my care of her child, as I turned to go to my room. I sat one moment by the parlor fire to warm my feet, and then went up stairs; but I had hardly taken off my cloak, before I heard a dreadful scream. I ran to the window, and saw Edward almost flying toward the house, his arms stretched over his head as if he were beside himself. I threw up the sash, and screamed, 'Where's Bella? O, where's Bella?'

"He began to cry aloud; but in the midst of his cry, I caught at the words, 'Bella's dead! O, dear, Bella is drowned!'

"Hardly knowing what I did, I snatched a shawl, threw it over my head, flew down to the study, and screamed, 'Mr. Bond, O, come quick.'

Then I ran as for my life toward the fatal spot. Swiftly as I ran, the poor father reached it before I did.

"Just at the foot of the hill is a small valley, which, in winter, is two or three feet deep with water. Joseph, in guiding our sled, had avoided this place, as he feared the ice was not strong enough to bear us. After we left, Edward thought he would have one splendid coast, and then come home. Bella sat on the back part of the sled, and either from not remembering, or not fearing the danger, down he went directly into the pond.

"He can remember nothing more, only that he heard a dreadful scream as his little sister sank under the ice. By the time Mr. Bond had taken the body from the water, the whole family had reached the place. The poor mother shed not a tear, but bade Joseph run back and tell Ruth to heat the boiler full of water. Mr. Bond stopped but one moment, put his ear to the child's heart, called out, 'My precious Bella,'

took off his study gown and wrapped her in it, holding her closely to his bosom, and ran all the way home. Poor Emily was almost wild, and began to upbraid Edward as the cause of Bella's death.

"The little fellow said not one word to excuse himself, but continued to sob most bitterly; until, at length, he came to my side, and looking in my face with his poor swollen eyes, he asked, 'Don't you think she will ever come to?'

"On our way home a messenger was sent to summon a physician; but, before he came, all effort had been abandoned as fruitless. The vital spark had fled, and only He who called Lazarus to life had power to bring it back. It was all in vain that warm baths and constant friction were applied, together with all other means to resuscitate a drowning person. It was all in vain that the almost distracted father breathed into the motionless lungs, and called in the most piteous accents, 'Bella, papa's own

Bella, can't you speak once more to poor papa?' While there was any thing to be done, he controlled himself; but as hope of her recovery grew fainter and fainter, it was fearful to witness his agonizing grief. I think his wife was becoming really alarmed. She touched his arm, and said, gently, 'Robert, let us remember who sent this affliction.'

"He caught her hand, and cried out, 'O Mary, how can I give her up? How can I live without her? Do, do entreat God for me!' and he rushed away, and locked himself in his study.

"No one but his wife saw him until this morning. She does not weep. She told me today she dared not give way for a moment; but she looks as if ten years of sorrow had passed over her since yesterday morning. I should have supposed that, in any similar case, she would have broken down, while he would be calm, and the support of all the others; but Emily, who is very like him, says he was just so when his other children died. The poor girl

is almost heart-broken. As to Edward, I know not how to describe his sorrow. He feels that all the family blame him, and he is ready to reproach himself as the cause of his sister's death. At the same time, he most keenly feels her loss; for, being nearly the same age, they were constantly together, when he was not occupied with his lessons.

"As for myself, this dreadful affliction has seemed to bring back to me our dear Sarah's loss. I can truly sympathize with my kind friends. All night long I scarcely shut my eyes, and this morning my pallor so alarmed Mr. Bond that he spoke to me after prayers, asking whether I were ill. All the reply I could make was a burst of tears, as I pointed into the room where lay the precious little form, shrouded for the tomb. He turned quickly away, with a sob of anguish, but returned presently, took my hands convulsively, as he said, 'You do truly obey the Scripture which saith, "Weep with those that weep."'

"Our friends have been very kind and sympathizing. Poor James was almost inconsolable when he found he could never hear that sweet voice again. Mr. Olmstead came to us directly, as soon as he heard the mournful tidings, hoping, until he reached here, that they had been much exaggerated. He has been a great comfort to the poor bereaved mother, and she seems glad to have any one upon whom she can lean. He has made all the necessary arrangements for the funeral, which is to-morrow, and told me to-day he had succeeded in obtaining some pretty white flowers to lay around the precious little head. Mrs. Bond told him she and her husband wished him to officiate at the funeral; but he shook his head as he replied that he would send for any one else they might name, but he was too much of a mourner. He dared not trust himself, for fear he could not get through the service. He was present this afternoon, when I assisted Mrs. Bond to cut off some of the beautiful golden ringlets. After gazing at

us silently for some minutes, he turned suddenly to the window, and I saw him wipe his eyes again and again. 'O, no one ever saw thee, darling Bella, but to love thee; and now thou art at rest!'

"This afternoon her mother related many anecdotes of her truthfulness, and her earnest desire to do right. When any thing was proposed, she would ask, 'Is it right? are we sure it is right, and that God likes us to do it?' Mrs. Bond says the thought that her child is with the Saviour, and will forever dwell in his embrace, is the one which sustains her. She will not allow her mind to rest upon any other. It is very affecting to me to see how she tries to bear up for her husband and children. She is more tender to Edward than to either of the others, and wished me to try to soothe him; but if any one speaks at all tenderly to him, his grief bursts out afresh, and he cries, 'O, don't! I can't bear it! I did it all!'"

Two days later she writes, —

"I did not finish my letter, for I wished to give you an account of the funeral. Just as we were going to the church, James Gannet came running in at the back door, all out of breath, and gave me a small box, saying he hoped he was not too late. He had been three miles on foot, to get some white buds from a house where he had seen them in the window, and told the lady he must have them at any price. Mr. Olmstead went back with me and opened the coffin, when I placed them in the small marble hand. 'Dear Bella, this is our last offering!'

"Mr. Bond was much more calm than I expected to see him; but his whole frame shook as he bent over the pale form, and pressed his farewell kiss upon the white forehead. His wife looked as if she were about to faint. This took his thoughts from his own grief, and I was glad to see that, for the first time since the overwhelming event, she wept freely.

"The service was most solemn and impres-

sive. The clergyman, whose name was Miles, read some very appropriate passages of Scripture, and to me, at least, the words came with power. After tea, Mr. Bond talked with the children freely, as he had not done before, and said he hoped now he could say from the heart, 'The will of the Lord be done;' 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;' 'that no chastening was for the present joyous — but grievous;' but it was his prayer that with him, his wife and children, it might 'yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.'

"I ought to tell you that before going to church, Mr. Olmstead asked me to walk in the procession with him. I thanked him, but said, 'I feel it to be my mission to soothe poor Edward, and I cannot leave him alone.'

"'You are right,' he replied; and he walked behind us, arm in arm with James."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW SCHOOL.

Dismissal of Dr. Morrison. — Wishes of his Church. — Mr. Olmstead's Declinature. — His Call at the Parsonage.

One day Mr. Bond received a letter dated New York city. This he read carefully, and passed to his wife, saying, "From our good friend Dr. Morrison, my dear."

This letter was in answer to a communication made through Mr. Bond, from the church in Morristown, over which he was pastor. The preceding year a body of clergymen throughout the state had met in conference with regard to a school of theology, to be founded in some favorable locality within the state, to obviate the necessity of sending their young men to the East for an education. As the churches to which these gentlemen belonged were most of

them young, and unable to give much toward the new enterprise, they consulted with reference to a suitable person to present the object to their friends in the Eastern States. Their choice fell upon Dr. Morrison. He was a gentleman of rare qualifications for the work, being both sound in judgment and uncommonly pleasing in his address. In addition to these advantages, he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a Theological Seminary to educate western men for western churches, and had therefore the success of the enterprise deeply at heart. But it was no easy matter to gain his consent to such a proposition. He was delightfully situated in a rapidly increasing town, where the great facilities, both by water and other communication, with large cities, bade fair to raise it to a position of great importance. His church was flourishing and united, and he felt satisfied that the work was prospering in his hands. He hoped to spend and be spent for his people — to live and die among them; and it required no little

sacrifice on his part to leave them, even for the year or two his brethren in the ministry supposed might be necessary to raise the requisite funds. But at length the entreaties of his friends, and a fear lest if he refused he might be found to be fighting against God, prevailed. He took an affectionate leave of his people, and started for New England, accompanied by his wife and daughter, who intended to pass the time with their relatives in Connecticut. He had been absent six months, and his pulpit supplied by different individuals, when, at the request of his church, he sent a young graduate, in the person of Mr. Olmstead, to occupy till he came.

It was now the first of March. Dr. Morrison wrote the committee, of whom Mr. Bond was chairman, that the labor of raising so large a sum as was considered necessary for the founding of a Theological Seminary was likely to prove much greater than he or they had supposed. He had been successful; perhaps, considering the vast number of benevolent objects before the

churches, eminently so; but still it would be a work of time. The affairs of his own congregation pressed heavily upon his spirits, and he asked advice of his respected friend whether it would not be better for him to request a dissolution of the relation between them, in order that they might call another pastor, and not be subjected to the trials of their present unsettled condition.

After much painful thought and prayerful meditation, Mr. Bond answered, that it would be best for Dr. Morrison to ask a dismission from his people. The letter he now received was accompanied by a formal request to his church and parish for such a dismissal.

For this the people of Morristown were not wholly unprepared. Mr. Bond had communicated to their committee the subject of the preceding letter, and consulted with them as to the answer he should make, so that they had gradually made up their minds for the result. In the absence of their pastor, they had become very

much attached to Mr. Olmstead; indeed, the church had considerably increased since his residence among them; so that, if he would accept their call, they would accede to the wishes of their beloved pastor with greater unanimity than a year before they could have considered possible.

On many accounts the continued absence of Dr. Morrison was painful to Mr. Bond. They had labored together for many years, had sympathized fully in their religious sentiments, while between their families there had grown up a friendship most close and intimate. To be sure, no distance could separate such friends, as the afflicted members of the L. parsonage had reason to know, when soon after their late loss came letters breathing the most tender sympathy and the warmest affection from those who were keenly afflicted in their affliction. Still the good clergyman was sure his beloved brother was in the path of duty, and would not present one personal motive to induce him to swerve from it. The longer he was acquainted with the

young candidate, the more fully was he convinced of the wisdom of extending to him a call to the vacant place, though he well knew Mr. Olmstead had never contemplated even the possibility of such a result of his engagement. Indeed, the young man had frequently remarked that it was his intention to return to the east, and pass another year in theological study; that one need to begin to preach in order to find out his own ignorance.

The week following the dissolution of the relation between Dr. Morrison and his church, two gentlemen called upon their kind friend Mr. Bond, to confer with him in relation to their next step. The visit was protracted to a late hour; but it is unnecessary to enter into a detailed account of it. The pastor advised them to proceed with caution, as Mr. Olmstead was wholly unconscious of their wishes concerning him, and he would open the subject to the young man.

This was done at the first favorable oppor-

tunity, when Mr. Olmstead promptly declined favoring such a movement. He thought himself too young and inexperienced to take so responsible a situation; and when this objection was partly obviated, he said plainly that he was not prepared to entertain the question. He consented to remain a few weeks, possibly some months, longer, on condition that it should be understood he was not a candidate for settlement.

Mr. Bond repeated the substance of this conversation to his family, and expressed his disappointment at the young clergyman's decision. He noticed a quick glance given by Emily to her friend Louise, whose face was covered with blushes, and for the first time the thought occurred to him that she might be the cause of Mr. Olmstead's hesitation. But he could call to mind no circumstance to favor such an opinion, and the idea was banished from his mind. Not many hours passed, however, before a call from the gentleman in question gave him an

opportunity to watch for any confirmation of such an opinion. Mr. Olmstead was cordially received by all the family. He then seated himself by Emily, and engaged her in a brisk conversation, while the eyes of Louise seemed fastened upon her work, and she never spoke except when personally addressed by one of them.

"If there be any particular interest, it is all on his side; but on the contrary, he seems much more occupied with Emily," was the father's silent observation. He did not notice the apparently trivial circumstance which occurred just as their visitor rose to leave. Taking advantage of a moment when Emily was summoned to her mother's side, Mr. Olmstead approached the silent Louise, and passing her a small volume, said in a low voice, "I have taken the liberty to bring over the book you mentioned as having a desire to read, and have marked some passages which may interest you."

A quick, bright glance, and a tremulous "thank

you, sir," was all the reply the young girl made, as the clergyman, with a smile upon his countenance, but an unsatisfied feeling at his heart, bade adieu, and was gone.

"I am glad I was mistaken," was the good pastor's secret comment. "I should be sorry to have the child's affections become at all involved while under my roof."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE YOUNG NURSE.

Sickness of Mr. Bond and Edward. — Letter of Louise to her Parents. — Convalescence of the sick Patients. — The Wedding. — Conversation with Mr. Olmstead.

May had been the month fixed by Dr. Merton for the return of Louise to New England. As the time approached, her friends begged her to write home for permission to prolong her visit until autumn. Mr. Olmstead was at the parsonage on one occasion when Mrs. Bond was presenting inducements to remain, and Emily asked him to add his entreaties to theirs.

He replied gently, and without even a glance at the young girl, "I fear my arguments would be powerless, and I am always careful of my words where I perceive they are not valued."

Such a remark caused the cheeks of Louise to burn with a tumult of emotions. As soon as

she thought the movement would be unobserved, she arose and left the room; but she had not gained the staircase before she was overtaken by the young gentleman. "Forgive me," he began. "I hardly knew what I was saying; but of late you have avoided every opportunity of speaking, or even of seeing me, and ——"

"This is hardly a proper place for an explanation," suggested Louise, her lip quivering with suppressed feeling; "but indeed, I never have ——" She could say no more; her eyes filled with tears, and turning hastily away, she ran to her own room.

Mr. Olmstead returned to the parlor, took a book from the table, and with the freedom which his intimacy warranted, soon became apparently absorbed in its contents. If Mrs. Bond had closely observed him, she would have seen that he bit his lip with vexation; that suddenly his countenance brightened; he pushed away his book, and entered into conversation.

"James is progressing rapidly with his house," he commenced.

"Yes. I rejoice that he is so successful."

"He tells me he hopes to have it ready for his parents to go into by the first of May."

"Does he expect to go on for them?" asked the lady, earnestly. "If so, it would be a good opportunity for Louise. He would be delighted to oblige her."

"Indeed, I cannot say," rejoined the gentleman, a shade passing over his countenance. "By the way," he added, starting from his seat, "he wished me to go around there this afternoon. Perhaps the young ladies would enjoy a walk."

Mrs. Bond sent Edward to ask them. The boy returned almost immediately, saying, "Emily is going; but Louise shook her head, and I believe she has been crying; her eyes are as red as a beet."

Mr. Olmstead took out his pocket book, tore off the blank part of a letter, and hastily wrote a few words, which he requested Edward to carry to Miss Merton.

Louise took the paper, and read with astonishment, "Do not be too severe in your punishment. Allow me to say I hope the walk will do you good."

"Are you not ready yet?" called out Emily, coming in with her bonnet on. "Come quick, or we shall go off without you."

"I give you leave to do that, if I am not below in two minutes," answered Louise, trying to speak gayly. She ran to the sink, bathed her eyes, and ere the close of the time stood at the door of the parlor, ready to accompany them.

The walk proved a pleasant one. Emily was in high spirits, and did not notice the unusual silence of her companions until their return. At length she broke out, "Why, Lou, I hardly think you have spoken a dozen words since we started; and why do you keep down that great, thick veil?" suddenly throwing it back, and disclosing cheeks flushed with excitement. "You can't think, Mr. Olmstead, how changed she

is; why, she used to be as great a talker as I am."

"Was that possible?" asked the gentleman, archly.

"Indeed, but it was. O, there's Joanna Mason! Excuse me a moment; I want to overtake her."

When the young girl and her companion reached the parsonage, the spirits of the former were much greater than when she left it, for she had been able to convince her friend that if her manner toward him had grown cold and reserved, as he insisted was the case, it was unknown to herself, and wholly unintentional. In addition, he had drawn from her a promise to consider him a friend, and one ready to do all in his power for her comfort and happiness.

Two weeks later, she wrote the following letter to her mother: —

"You may imagine me seated on a cricket, with my portfolio in my lap, dear mother, for I

have a little patient lying on a couch by my side, who will not allow me to leave him. I hope you will not be alarmed when I inform you that two in this house are prostrate with fever; but I myself was never in better health. It is now nearly a fortnight since Eddy was attacked; and the next day his father began to show symptoms of the disease. Mrs. Bond has been obliged to devote herself wholly to her husband, and as Emily has 'no gift at nursing,' (to use her own expression,) the care of dear Eddy has fallen to me. You can hardly imagine how happy I am to be able to make some slight return for all their kindness. Mrs. Bond says she is just as easy about her boy as if she were with him herself, and the little fellow will hardly allow me out of the room. Though I have the care of him during the day, yet I have never watched but twice. Our good James is always ready, and, I believe, could almost live without sleeping; and Mr. Olmstead insists upon doing his part: indeed, he would

have turned me out of my office altogether, but I was firm. A short time since, he fancied that I had taken a dislike to him, and made me promise to be frank and cordial as I used to be. So I told him I had not the slightest fear of taking the fever; that I thought it my duty to nurse the sick boy, and that, God helping me, I meant to do it. Eddy was very dangerously ill for a few days, and his father was too sick to be even informed of it. O, how anxious I felt that he should speak and tell us he was not afraid to die! Ever since Bella's death he has been exceedingly thoughtful and conscientious, and would respond freely when I talked with him upon the subject of religion; but I was not aware that he was indulging a trembling hope that his peace was made with God. I begged Mr. Olmstead to pray, and pray earnestly, that his life might be spared, or that he might be fitted for his great and last change. And he did pray most fervently for the dear boy. It was during one of these prayers that I was first

aware that he was conscious. I had been bathing his hands and face, and as I kneeled by the bedside I still retained his hand in mine. As Mr. Olmstead went on importuning for the blessing, my eyes overflowed. Eddy had for some days been delirious; but now he feebly raised his fingers, and tried to wipe away my tears. I was overjoyed, and so much excited, that after a while Mr. Olmstead quietly took my place, and insisted I should go out for a walk. I have become more acquainted with him in the fortnight since Eddy was sick than in all the previous months; but he will not allow such to be the case with him. He says, when he first came I was as frank with him as Emily was, and that he has been studying me ever since. He even pretends to know what I am thinking about whenever I sit for a moment silent or serious. But he is mistaken.

"Since that afternoon I have often talked with Eddy, and am delighted to find him peaceful and happy, willing to live or die, just as

God thinks best for him. He enjoys so much having me read hymns and portions of Scripture to him; and now that he is better, we have a regular time just after breakfast, as then we are more free from interruption; when, sometimes I sing a few verses, as I used to do at home.

"Mr. Bond is not recovering as fast as my patient, and has some symptoms still, which cause his wife and physician great anxiety. She came into the nursery a few moments since, and sent her kindest regards to you and dear father. I wish I could see a little more bloom upon her countenance."

In another letter, written at nearly the same period, Louise gives an account of the wedding which she attended. After stating that Eddy was able to be up nearly all day, and that Mr. Bond was beginning to take nourishing food, she says, "You will remember an account I gave you of a quilting party. The young girl's name was Sophia Blake. For some reason she took a

great fancy to me; or, as Phebe Shepard used to say, I became very popular with her. She imagined that, because I came from the east, I knew more about modern fashions than her companions here. Of course I have been very happy to be useful to her, though I assured her I knew little about what she called style. Soon after Eddy was taken sick, she came in to invite me to pass a day with her, to assist in some of her preparations. This I could not do, but I kept an apron which she wanted trimmed, and did it for her while I was watching my patient. Since he became convalescent, so that Emily or Joseph could take care of him, I have been twice and passed the whole day. Emily is to be one of the bridemaids, and Sophia is very earnest that I should be the other. I said yes without the slightest consideration; but afterwards repented, as there was no gentleman with whom it would be pleasant for me to stand.

"One day I was there, and in the afternoon it snowed quite fast, so that the ground was wet.

Mr. Olmstead called at the parsonage, and when he found I was away, harnessed his horse into Mr. Bond's sleigh, and came to carry me home. We were just discussing the subject, and Sophia was naming one and another of the young men with whom I am acquainted, when Mr. Olmstead came in. She at once told him her wish, and asked him to help us out of our dilemma. He could think of no one, but as soon as we were alone, asked me if I would stand with him. 'No,' I answered, decidedly.

"He was very sober for a moment, and as I had no wish to hurt his feelings, I said, 'I thought you wished me to be frank with you, and, therefore, though you do not ask them, I shall proceed to give my reasons.' We were just at the crossing where we turn to go to the parsonage, and he inquired, 'Are you afraid of getting cold?'

"'Not the least, sir.'

"He then turned in the other direction, and requested me to go on, but with rather a stiff air.

"'As you are a clergyman,' I commenced, my heart beating painfully at his solemn manner, 'I cannot endure the thought of placing you in a situation where you would be made the subject of remark; where ——

"'Then you object on my account,' he exclaimed in a gay tone.

"'Of course,' I replied, 'it was wholly on yours. There is always a good deal of mirth at a wedding; and judging from what I have seen, I think there will be no lack of that element in this case. As you have asked my opinion, I must confess I do not like to see a clergyman too familiar or free at such times. I think Mr. Bond preserves a happy medium. His presence is never felt to be a restraint; and yet he does nothing himself which at all lowers his dignity. I have always heard my father say that a clergyman's conduct was closely watched, and that he ought to be exceedingly careful. But there is another objection,' I added; 'you must perform the ceremony.'

"'No,' said he, 'that I am not authorized to do. I cannot officiate in that capacity until I am ordained, and I would not until I was married myself. I have always disliked to see a young unmarried man performing so solemn a service.'

"We had some other conversation on general subjects before we reached home. He seemed very much pleased when I told him how much I liked the West, and that if you and father would remove here, I would be contented never to return to New England.

"The evening of the wedding, Mr. Sampson, a Methodist minister for whom Mr. Bond had sent, rode with Emily and Joseph, and Mr. Olmstead came in a sleigh from L. for me. I had persuaded Sophia that one bridemaid would be sufficient, and she reluctantly consented to excuse me. But just as the party walked into the room, and stood opposite the clergyman, Mr. Olmstead gave me his arm, walked across the room, and placed me by the side of Emily,

where we stood until the ceremony ended. 'I will not forget your good advice,' he said, in a low tone, when the company were beginning to gather about the bride. And he did not forget it. He conducted exactly right, and I told him so as we rode home. I was very warm, though I wore a white muslin dress; but he almost smothered me with shawls and robes, for fear I should take cold, and then he made me confess that I had passed a very pleasant evening; when he said that it only needed one thing to make it the pleasantest of his life. I dared not ask what that one thing was, though he seemed to wish me to do so."

CHAPTER XX.

BUDS OF AFFECTION.

Emily's Invitation. — Her Parents' Consent. — Her delighted Anticipations. — Louise a useful Friend. — Various Drawbacks. — The confidential Interview. — Letter to Dr. Merton. — The conditional Engagement.

EARLY in May Louise received a letter from her parents, enclosing one to Mr. and Mrs. Bond, which contained a pressing invitation for Emily to return with their daughter and pass the summer in New England. Dr. Merton also requested his friend to make inquiries for some suitable opportunity for them to journey in company with persons going East. He intended himself to meet them in New York city.

As the result of these inquiries, Mr. Bond ascertained that a lady and gentleman from Morristown were going to New York early in July, and would be pleased to take the charge of the young people.

Emily was most happy to accept the kind invitation, and as her parents made no serious opposition, she was speedily involved in all the bustle of preparation. Nothing by her was ever accomplished quietly. She liked excitement, — something going on which taxed her powers to the utmost, — and the idea of visiting new scenes, of witnessing, with her own eyes, the mighty ocean and the lofty mountains she had so often heard described, filled her with inexpressible delight. Her enthusiasm was so inspiring that the whole family were compelled to share it with her. Even Mr. Olmstead, who, of late, had grown strangely reserved, gazed at her countenance, sparkling with animation, and felt his own soul grow warm as he listened to her rapturous anticipations of pleasure.

Louise, who was always delighted when she could be of service to those she loved, made vigorous use of her needle, while Emily as vigorously employed her tongue. Mrs. Bond cut out garments, Louise made, and Emily admired

them, wondering in what scenes she should be participating when they were worn.

In the midst of all this excitement, Emily alone was free from care. Mr. and Mrs. Bond shared many misgivings concerning the conduct of their daughter when she should be away from all parental restraint. Impetuous to an extreme, she could be influenced only through her affections. They feared much, and they also hoped much from the intended journey.

Louise, too, was secretly troubled by the change in the conduct of Mr. Olmstead. She tried to recall any remark she might have made which could have given offence; but in vain. She could not venture to request an explanation, as, on a former occasion, he had done, and therefore endeavored to stifle her disappointment by an increase of gayety.

In the mean time, the gentleman was sorely tried to discover the path of duty. Inclination strongly urged one course, while reason suggested another. After trying for several weeks to

reconcile the two, and finding that the warfare improved neither his health nor his spirits, he concluded to ask counsel of his friend, Mr. Bond. He agreed with Emily that when a certain duty was to be performed, the sooner it was accomplished, the better; and in less than an hour after the above decision, he was knocking at the study door belonging to the L. parsonage.

What passed there during the two hours which followed can, perhaps, be best learned by a letter sent in haste to Morristown, to be in season for the morning mail to the East. It was as follows: —

TO DR. MERTON.

"Dear and Respected Friend:

"When I received your daughter from your hands on the morning we left you, I promised to treat her, in all respects, as if she were my own. This promise I have so far endeavored to fulfil; indeed, after passing a few weeks with her in the intimacy of the social circle, my

affections were constrained toward her, and I not only treated her, but loved her, as a child.

"Now, however, I am unwilling to take upon myself the responsibility which none but a parent should assume. This morning a young gentleman, of unexceptionable character, has asked my consent to address her. This is no other than the young clergyman who has been preaching at Morristown — the Mr. Olmstead, whose name, no doubt, is familiar through the letters of Louise. The church and parish are only waiting his consent to give him a call to settle among them; but this he has thus far resolutely refused, in consequence, as he told me this morning, of his warm affection for your daughter, and his fear lest you would not consent to her being settled at such a distance from the parental roof.

"You will naturally ask, 'Does Louise know of this, and are her affections involved, so that she would be pained by my refusal of his suit?' I can only answer that I suppose his attentions,

which thus far have been general, have not been unpleasing to her. Beyond that I have no means of judging, as she is not one who would make a display of her interest in any man, but would rather use her utmost efforts to conceal it, until such time as he openly offered her his hand. This, he says, he has been prevented from doing solely because she is absent from home. He assured me that he had done great violence to his own feelings by the reserve he had assumed to conceal his love for her.

"So far I consider his course to be honorable. I recommend him to your mercy, only saying that he is a son of whom any father might be proud, and that I shall be happy indeed if my daughter is chosen by one so every way worthy.

"With the highest sentiments of respect,

Yours very truly,

ROBERT BOND."

"P. S. I suppose it is unnecessary to remind you that your answer to this letter will be most anxiously expected."

During the two weeks and a half which followed, the good minister often was tempted to recall the prohibition to the ardent lover to visit at the parsonage. His absence seemed so strange, and even unkind, that Emily loudly remonstrated, while Louise, in spite of all her efforts, grew pale and dispirited. When she met him, as she occasionally did at the Sabbath schools, or in a hasty walk, his manner certainly did not tend to "settle her mind" as to the motives which actuated him to such variable conduct.

At the close of that period, she was one morning accompanying Edward to the cabin of a new settler, where there had been sickness, when she saw in the distance a horseman approaching at full speed. As he drew nearer she recognized Mr. Olmstead. He bowed low in passing, but did not slacken his pace, and soon turned the cross road leading to the parsonage.

Louise suppressed a sigh of disappointment that she had missed his visit, and went bravely

on in the performance of her self-imposed duty. Entering the humble dwelling, her thoughts were soon absorbed in administering to the comfort of the sick woman and child, who were sadly in need of care. Taking from her basket a paper of crackers, she raked up a few embers to toast them, while Edward placed upon the coals a dipper of broth. She then bolstered up her patients, poured some warm water upon a napkin, and bathed their faces and hands, when she was at liberty to stand and witness their enjoyment of their nourishing food.

"Where is your husband?" she asked, kindly.

"He has gone out to seek employment," replied the woman; "and since the light began to dawn I have not seen the face of a single human. We might have starved but for your kindness."

Louise smiled, as she always did at this provincial expression, and was proceeding to reply, when Edward touched her arm. She turned quickly, and saw Mr. Olmstead standing in the

doorway, his countenance perfectly radiant with happiness.

"How much longer are you intending to stay here?" he asked hurriedly, as she approached him. "Mr. Bond sent me for you, or rather he gave me leave to accompany you home."

"I will go at once if you are in haste," she replied, blushing deeply at his ardent gaze; "indeed, I think there is nothing more that I can do here at present."

"I am in tremulous haste," was the whispered response. Louise then placed the remainder of the broth within reach of the invalid, put on her bonnet and shawl, and having bade the woman and child good morning, left the door in company with Mr. Olmstead just in time to perceive her young companion running at full speed toward home. She turned to the gentleman for an explanation, when he replied, with a heightened color, "I hope you will excuse my summary mode of dismissing your attendant; but I have long promised him a ride upon my colt, and he

has now gone to improve the opportunity while I am far more pleasantly employed. In truth, Miss Merton, I have long been impatient for an interview with you, — and — I —"

"I should hardly have supposed that," replied Louise, quietly; "it is a long time since you favored us with a call."

"I am ready to explain all that, and every other part of my conduct," responded the gentleman, warmly. "If you will only listen, I think you will allow I had sufficient excuse."

We must suppose that Louise gave her friend a candid hearing; for when, after an hour, she returned to her friends at the parsonage, she had promised, if her parents would consent, to walk by his side through the remainder of her life.

When Mr. Olmstead hastened to the study to communicate his happiness to his sympathizing friend, he met with the most cordial congratulations, but with them a friendly caution lest he overstep the bounds set by Dr. Merton.

Louise's father had certainly not forbidden him to hope; but in his letter to Mr. Bond, said, "I have the greatest confidence both in your affection for my daughter and in your judgment of the young clergyman's character; still, before I give my unqualified assent to his proposals, I should wish to see him long enough to form some opinion as to the congeniality of their temper and habits. If, therefore, he should feel inclined to join the party, who, you tell me, are coming on the first of July, I can assure him of a hearty welcome."

"Miss Merton expressly gave me to understand," urged the young man, "that she should wish to consult her parents, though convinced I had not addressed her without their sanction."

When the family met at dinner, Louise was not a little amused, as well as embarrassed, by the watchful attention of the boys, who seemed just waking up to the conviction that novel and interesting scenes were passing before them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONCLUSION.

The Journey homeward. — The curious Incident. — Dr. Merton's Consent to the Marriage of his Daughter. — Preparations for the Wedding. — Parting from Friends.

In the close intimacy produced by travelling in company, Mr. Olmstead and Louise discovered many new and pleasing traits in the character of each other. Mr. Butler and his lady, who were of the party, and firm supporters of Mr. Olmstead in the church at Morristown, did all in their power to amuse Emily, by pointing out objects of interest upon the journey.

Louise, from the first, had somewhat regretted that she was obliged to go home by the same route over which she had once passed; but a whispered remark of her lover that when she returned she should choose her own line of travel, brought a crimson hue to her cheek, and

if it did not quite satisfy her, yet effectually silenced every expression of discontent. Not even the pleasure she experienced in the society and attentions of her devoted friend could divert her from a desire to be of use to those about her. When the party reached Buffalo, and took the canal boats for Troy, an incident occurred which called forth her liveliest sympathy and interest. One evening, just at twilight, they approached Utica, where there was a crowd of passengers waiting to come on board. At the request of Emily, Mr. Olmstead and Louise accompanied her to the deck to witness the lively scene. Among others waiting their turn, Louise noticed a hardy yeoman, with his wife and child. The woman appeared timid, and hung back, so that it required all his powers of persuasion to induce her to go forward. He had his arms filled with packages, while she hugged her infant tightly to her breast. The repeated cry, "All aboard,"—"all aboard," at length startled the man with the fear of being left behind, and

throwing his baggage to the ground, he caught the baby from her, and darted with it along the plank. Louise and Emily started forward, and being foremost among the group, the former received the infant in her arms. Back the man flew to his wife, but it was too late. The last warning had been given; the boat moved off, and the captain, declaring that he was already behind his time, refused to put back. In the deepening twilight they could just see the woman frantically wringing her hands, as she screamed after her baby, while the father was fiercely gesticulating for the boat to return and restore his child.

"What shall we do with the poor baby?" asked Louise, when she could recover her breath. "O, how sorry I am that the captain didn't take them in! Can't something be done for the mother? She will be almost distracted."

"Now we have gone so far, I fear the captain cannot be prevailed upon to return," replied Mr. Olmstead, gravely. "I think his conduct was

inhuman; but possibly he did not know that the parents were separated from their child."

By this time, many of the passengers had gathered about the poor babe, and gazed at it with a curious eye. One woman manifested real sympathy for the mother and compassion for the child, by offering to take care of it until it could be restored to its parents. But the babe was satisfied with its present condition, and clung lovingly to the neck of its kind protectress, causing a warm glow to spread all over her face. She begged Mr. Olmstead to accompany her to the cabin, that she might shield her charge from the night air; nor could she be induced to leave it even when, soothed by her gentle lullaby, it fell sweetly asleep, and was laid in the low berth. Emily remained with her friend, while the young clergyman impatiently paced the deck, devoutly wishing the mother would appear and claim her child.

This wish was much more speedily fulfilled than he had dared to expect. About nine

o'clock the boat stopped at a small town to leave passengers, when a man rushed on board, calling out, "Quick, quick. Give me my baby!"

"Follow me," cried Mr. Olmstead, running hastily down the steep staircase. "Here she is, sweetly asleep, and two ladies watching her."

"May God reward you, miss!" exclaimed the man, with a trembling voice, as Louise took the infant from the bed and placed her in the father's strong arms.

One moment more, and he had dashed up the stairs, over the plank, and was out of sight in the darkness.

After Mr. Olmstead had been for a week a guest at the house of Dr. Merton, the good man agreed with his friend Mr. Bond, that the young clergyman was a son of whom any man might be proud. As Louise was one of the younger children in a large family, he had thought the time far distant when he should be called to give her to a husband's care. But when he saw her happy in the love of so de-

voted a Christian, he put away every selfish consideration, and gave them his consent and his blessing.

It was a greater trial to the mother to part with her only remaining daughter, and no motive save the happiness and increased usefulness of her child availed to comfort her under the anticipated separation.

The summer and early autumn passed rapidly amid busy preparations for the wedding, which was to take place in October. Mr. Olmstead had received and accepted a call from the church in Morristown, and during his absence from them had been prosecuting his studies at a Theological School only twenty miles distant from the village where Dr. Merton resided.

Agnes Lovell could not easily be persuaded to consent to the lengthened separation which the marriage of her dear Louise would occasion. "It is almost like burying her," she said, "as far as any comfort I shall take with her;" but, notwithstanding her sorrow,

she was by far the most interested of any of Louise's young companions in the procuring and arrangement of the bridal trousseau.

The period at length arrived when Louise was to leave the sheltering care of her beloved parents, and to give her happiness to the keeping of one comparatively a stranger. But though she felt most keenly the separation from those whose love she so highly prized, yet not for one moment did she regret the choice she had made. She rejoiced rather that she was chosen to be the wife of one so devoted to the cause of Christ, and was thought worthy to labor at his side in the advancement of the cause of their Redeemer.

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